

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 108.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 15, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE GYPSIES; OR CHASING THE CHILD STEALERS. BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



The old fortune teller examined Young King Brady's palm intently for a moment, and then, pointing at the line, said: "Young man, you are on the right track; your quest will be successful but very dangerous."

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The Bradys and the Gypsies:

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CHASING THE CHILD-STEALERS.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIG DIAMOND.

"Old King Brady," said the chief of the Secret Service, late one afternoon in September, as he stood on the corner of Wall and South streets, "do you see that tall, dark-complexioned man leaving the Cuban steamship dock?"

"The stylish fellow with a Van Dyke beard and a high silk hat?" asked the noted old detective, as he pulled his big felt hat down tighter upon his white hair and turned his smooth-shaven face toward the man in question.

"Yes," assented the chief, as he lit his cigar; "he is Maximo Velasquez, the private secretary to the Spanish consul, and I want you to shadow him."

"What crime has he been committing?" queried the big detective, as he buttoned his old blue frock coat up to his high collar and old-fashioned black stock.

"Smuggling a diamond as big around as a silver quarter," answered the chief, "and it was to point him out that I brought you and your partner here. I had information that he was going aboard the steamer Newport at this hour to get the big diamond from the purser, and I am quite sure he now has it hidden in his pocket, to cheat the Custom House officers."

"Then you are doing this work for the Collector of the Port of New York?"

"Exactly," answered the chief. "He is a friend of mine, and I readily offered to apprehend this smuggler for him to secure the duty on that stone."

"How did you get your information, sir?"

"I'll tell you, if you will walk along with me up Wall street in pursuit of Velasquez, for we must not let him get out of sight for an instant, as he may pass the big diamond to a confederate and thus baffle us."

"Very well, chief. But where is Harry Brady, my pupil?"

"Standing over there looking in that drug store window. Signal him."

He pointed at a fine-looking youth of about twenty, who was attired somewhat like Old King Brady, and the veteran vented a low whistle.

The boy turned like a flash, and seeing them going, he followed them.

The Bradys were not related, although they had the same name. A warm friendship existed between the pair. They worked together as partners.

Young King Brady, the boy, was an ambitious fellow whom the old officer was teaching to become a detective, and he became so proficient that he always made the greatest efforts to excel his tutor.

The wonderful work performed by these sleuths made them dreaded by the crooks of the whole country. They never lost a case they undertook.

As they walked up the street the chief took a letter from his pocket, and handing it to the old detective, he said briefly:

"Read that; it explains itself."

The letter was couched in the following terms:

"HAVANA, Cuba, Sept. 5th.

"CHIEF OF SECRET SERVICE, New York: I beg to advise you that Fernandez & Co., of this city, have a diamond weighing over fifty carats, which they smuggled from Brazil. Its value is \$60,000. They intend to send it to New York in care of the purser of the steamer Newport, to have it sold there. The Newport will leave here next week. At five o'clock in the afternoon, on the day following the arrival of that craft in New York, a man will board the steamer and secretly carry the diamond ashore in his pocket. That man is Maximo Velasquez, secretary to the Spanish consul in your city. He may try to sell the diamond to the jewelry firm of Fairfax & Co., of Maiden Lane. By notifying the collector of the port you can have that huge gem seized, appraised and levy the duty on it to which the Port of New York is entitled. Respectfully yours,

"WM. WHITE."

Old King Brady recognized the writer as a special officer attached to the Secret Service who had been sent to Cuba to extradite a fugitive criminal. While there he had evidently got wind of the anticipated crooked transaction, and notified his chief in order to see that the ends of justice were attained.

The old detective now understood the situation, and returning the warning letter to the chief, he said:

"So the smuggling game is now being carried out according to their plan?"

"It is," replied the chief, "and the man ahead of us there has got that big diamond in his possession now. It is my wish that you follow him to his abode, arrest him, and take the diamond away."

"Have you a warrant, sir?"

"Yes. Here it is. Take it. I leave the case in your hands now."

He handed over the document and the detective pocketed it.

The chief then abruptly turned into a side street and walked away.

Observing this, Harry Brady quickened his pace and joined his partner.

"Well, what's going on?" queried the boy, curiously.

Old King Brady explained matters.

A look of deep interest settled upon Harry's handsome face, and he said:

"It's going to be a very easy, simple case."

"Perhaps," replied the old sleuth; "but I've got a feeling that we are going to have a great deal of trouble on account of that diamond."

"The more excitement the better," laughed Young King Brady, his eyes sparkling. "Tame work never suits you know."

Just then they reached Broadway, and saw Velasquez turn into that thoroughfare and mingle with the great, surging crowd.

"Watch him closely now," whispered Old King Brady quickly. "He must not be allowed to slip the stone to the passing confederate."

"He's going into that restaurant."

"You stay back a few moments to avoid suspicion."

Harry nodded and paused. Old King Brady followed Velasquez in.

The man sat at a table and ordered his dinner, and then the now separated detectives seated themselves where they could watch every move he made without arousing his suspicion.

When the waiter was gone to fill his order they saw him slyly draw a small, purple velvet jewel-box from his pocket.

He glanced around to see if any one was watching him, but nobody seemed to be paying the slightest attention to what he did.

Satisfied that he was not observed, he opened the box, and as the glow of the electric lights fell upon the diamond contained the Bradys could scarcely suppress a cry of amazement.

The gem was enormous and its beauty was marvelous.

It flashed and sparkled with the most extraordinary brilliancy.

"That's the handsomest diamond I ever saw in my life," thought Old King Brady. "It's white, fiery and beautiful cut. It's a wonder."

Velasquez sat admiring the stone a few moments, and finally put it back in his pants pocket, after another survey to see if his action was seen.

The Bradys ordered their supper and dined when the Spaniard did.

In the meantime they were carefully studying his face.

He was a man of about thirty-five, tall, slender and finely clad.

But there was a sinister look on his dark, aquiline features which made the detectives distrust him.

He spent fully two hours at the supper table.

When he finally left the restaurant he crossed over to the Sixth avenue elevated road and, with the Bradys closely shadowing him, rode uptown.

The man alighted at One Hundred and Fourth street, walked over to the rear entrance to Central Park, and glided on one of the carriage drives.

By this time the sky was spangled with stars and the full, round moon swung in the dark blue dome of heaven like a electric light.

The rays slanting down upon the road illuminated it brightly.

The silent sleuths were still dogging the smuggler's footsteps, and when they penetrated the trees of the gloomy park they kept their bodies well hidden in the shade of the bushes and shrubs.

Along they glided like twin shadows, and keenly watching their man, they saw him turn from the road and go down in a deep hollow.

It was a hidden nook, with a tiny pond at the bottom, where few people ever penetrated, and it was now occupied by a band of gypsies.

They had two covered wagons, from which they had unhitched their horses, leaving them to stray, browsing the luxuriant grass.

A campfire was sending up a column of dark smoke near the edge of the pond, and a woman was cooking some food over it.

Several poorly-clad, dark-visaged men were lounging about the place, and a beautiful young gypsy girl was peering out of one of the wagons.

The savage growling of a huge hound, tied to a tree, notified the gypsies that a stranger was near, and the young girl exclaimed:

"Rocco! Rocco Zingari!"

"Yes, Posey," replied a huge fellow with a swarthy face, a black mustache, and dark, piercing eyes beneath a pair of beetling brows.

"Prince scents the coming of some one, Rocco."

"Ay, 'tis plain enough."

Just then the Spaniard paused, and the Bradys crouched behind a clump of bushes to watch and listen.

Velasquez vented a peculiar whistle.

The moment Rocco heard it he gave a sudden start and exclaimed:

"It's Velasquez, the Spaniard. He told me he had a job for me that would bring us thousands of dollars, and I suspect it is a thirst for vengeance which prompts him to engage me in this task."

He answered the whistle and hastened forward.

A few moments afterward he met the secretary and cried harshly:

"I see you are prompt to keep your appointment with me,

Mr. Velasquez. And I am burning with curiosity to know what the important task is you have cut out for me to perform."

"Come over here, Rocco, where the rest of the band cannot hear what I have to say to you," replied the Spaniard, drawing him aside, "and I'll tell you something that will astonish you."

CHAPTER II.

STABBED TO DEATH.

Maximo Velasquez led the gypsy through the dense underbrush to a point not ten yards from where the Bradys were crouching behind the bushes.

As they paused the Spaniard asked his companion, curiously:

"Don't you know it's against the rules of the Park Department for you gypsies to pitch your camp in this place?"

"Of course I know it," laughed Rocco grimly; "but we stole in during the night, last Wednesday, and no one saw us. (This place is seldom visited by human beings. It's an ideal spot to live in, and its wild beauty tempted us so strongly we could not help risking it."

"But if you are found out——"

"Bah! What could the commissioners do? Arrest us? No. They merely would drive us out, and that would be the end of it."

"You dare not carry on your fortune-telling here."

"No; but we can live in peace and contentment. However, that has got nothing to do with the object of this meeting, Mr. Velasquez."

"Carramba! No!"

"Then what is it you want of me? When last we met you signified that you could put me in the way of gaining a fortune."

"And so I can, Rocco, a big one, too."

"What is your plan?"

"I shall tell you. But it is proper that you should have a clear understanding of the case. You will then comprehend my object better."

"You are going to tell me of an incident of your past life, I suppose?"

"Exactly," replied Velasquez, nodding. "It's an old story, too. George Fairfax and I were rivals for the hand of Lola Dell six years ago. He won the girl, and I swore vengeance. A beautiful child was born to them, and they love it passionately and lavish their wealth upon it."

"Well, what has all this to do with me?"

"Be patient and you will soon find out," replied the Spaniard. "I saw an advertisement in the Herald to-day in which George Fairfax asks for a nursemaid for his child. It suggested to me a plan for vengeance. I want you to send Posey to secure that position to-morrow."

"For what purpose?"

"So she can steal the child."

"What!" gasped Rocco, with a start.

"That's exactly what I mean."

"And if she does?"

"Dottie Fairfax can be held for ransom."

"Her father is rich, is he?"

"Worth a million."

"Then we can put a high price on the child's head?"

"Twenty thousand dollars, and you'll get it."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive!"

The gypsy reflected in silence a few moments.

His cupidity was deeply aroused, but he concealed it artfully.

Finally he said:

"It's all very well for you to come here and tell us to do a trick that we already know, and hang out a fortune as an inducement. But we have all the risk and do your dirty work for nothing. Oh, no. Much as we might try for that ransom, we would have all to lose by failure, and you would be gratifying your spite for nothing through us. See here, Mr. Velasquez, if you want us to do this job, we wish to be paid some cash; and it must be something substantial, too."

Velasquez was not prepared for a demand of this kind.

He thought the ransom would satisfy Rocco.

Not to be defeated in his purpose, however, he made up his mind to work upon the gypsy's avarice.

With this cunning plan in view he said in hesitating tones:

"You are very unreasonable, Rocco."

"Not at all," replied the man. "When people want any dirty work done they usually have to pay for it. You can't be an exception."

"Would you cast aside this fine chance to make a fortune from the wealthy jeweler, just to get some additional money from me?"

"Certainly I would," was the firm reply.

"Well," said Velasquez, after a pause, "I have no money to offer you. But I have here a magnificent big diamond which I will give you the moment you prove to me that the child is abducted."

"A diamond?" asked Rocco. "Let me see it."

The Spaniard drew a jewel case from his pocket, and

opening it in the moonlight, he held it up for the gypsy inspection.

A cry of admiration escaped Rocco's lips.

He glared at the stone eagerly, and cried in tones of light:

"Magnificent! Wonderful!"

"What do you think of that?" asked Velasquez, with smile, as he observed the look of avarice in the Roman man's eyes.

"It is worth a fortune, isn't it?"

"Fully \$60,000," replied the Spaniard, coolly.

"And you will give that to have the child kidnapped, you can enjoy torturing the man you owe a grudge?"

"Yes. I'd give up my life to gratify my vengeance."

The gypsy raised his hand.

"I'll do the job!" he exclaimed.

"Good! I thought you had not lost your senses."

"I shall begin operations at once, Mr. Velasquez."

"Very well, Rocco. The sooner the better."

"When I have the child in my possession I'll claim the gem. If you refuse to give it to me——"

"What will you do?"

"Kill you, or betray you to the police."

"I'll abide by the consequence, Rocco."

"Give me the particulars of that advertisement for a nurse girl."

"Here is the clipping I cut from to-day's paper."

The secretary handed it over.

Putting the slip of paper in his pocket, Rocco exclaimed gruffly:

"This matter will be attended to at once. Is that all you have to say?"

"I'll return to see you in a few days."

"Very well, Mr. Velasquez."

"Good night, Rocco. Keep mum."

"Good night, Mr. Velasquez. Watch the newspapers."

They shook hands and separated.

The gypsy plunged into the thicket and disappeared.

For a few moments the secretary stood with an evil smile on his face.

"I'll have my revenge at last," he muttered, "and that thieving gypsy shall never see this diamond again."

He strode away and headed for the path by which he arrived.

The Bradys were after the man in a twinkling.

Having overheard the whole conspiracy, they realized that a very dangerous game was going to be worked on Mr. Fairfax.

To baffle it was now their plan.

In order to do this intelligently they had to arrest Velasquez.

As they stole along in pursuit of him Old King Brady muttered:

"What do you think of that plot, Harry?"

"It's simply a fiendish form of revenge," replied the boy, angrily. "If that little child is abducted, think of the terrible feelings of the parents. The mental torture they will suffer will be terrible. Such a crime as that is as bad as murder."

"The queer part is that the big diamond was to be sold to Mr. Fairfax. There is little probability that he would know it was smuggled."

"And as Velasquez would scarcely have the impudence to personally try to sell the stone to his enemy, the jeweler could not know that the spiteful Spaniard smuggled it into this country."

"See there where Velasquez is going."

He pointed through an opening in some bushes.

Young King Brady saw the villain suddenly dart around a heap of rocks.

The next moment he disappeared from view.

Creeping ahead stealthily, the Bradys had almost reached the rocks when they were suddenly thrilled by hearing a wild shriek of horror.

It was Velasquez' voice.

The next moment they heard him cry in awful tones:

"Oh, you have killed me!"

There came the sound of a heavy fall.

For an instant the Bradys were transfixed with astonishment.

Recovering, they rushed ahead, passed around the rocks, and emerged in a small open glen into which the moonlight was streaming.

Lying on his back upon the ground was Velasquez.

A dagger was buried to the hilt in his bosom.

The Bradys saw at a glance that he was dead.

Hearing the crashing of twigs, they glanced across the glen just in time to see the shadowy figure of a man vanishing in the bushes.

So brief was their sight of him, however, that neither could have known the man by sight had they ever met him again.

Old King Brady rushed over to the Spaniard and knelt down.

"Dead!" he exclaimed. "He has been robbed. His pockets are turned inside out."

"See if the big diamond is there," said Harry.

"It's gone," replied Old King Brady after a quick search.

"As only Rocco, the gypsy, besides ourselves, knew he had

that gem, he must have been the murderer," said Harry, impressively.

"Run after the man and see if you can catch him!"

CHAPTER III.

CAUGHT BY THE GYPSIES.

Only a few moments had been spent by the Bradys discussing the murder and searching the corpse.

Consequently the villain who stabbed Velasquez had not gone far ere Harry went rushing after him.

Plunging into the bushes, the boy easily discerned the trail left by the man in his hasty flight through the shrubbery.

With such a plain trail in sight Harry followed the fugitive with the unerring precision of a bloodhound.

The trail led him among the trees, and thence by a circuitous route back toward the gypsy encampment.

On the brow of the hill Harry caught view of the man again. Crouching close to the ground, with his body bent far over, the escaping villain was going along at a rapid pace.

His body was so dim in the gloom of the trees, however, that the young detective could not distinctly make out his figure.

It made the boy angry.

He was anxious to see what the man looked like.

"By Jove, he runs like a deer," thought the young detective, "and I'm blest if I can distinguish his figure at all. But he's going down in the hollow toward the camp. He wouldn't be likely to do that unless he belonged there. I'm more convinced than ever now that he is no one but Rocco."

The man had vanished again like a flash behind some bushes, but he was going straight in the direction of the camp.

Young King Brady paused and watched sharply.

Once more he caught view of the fugitive.

This time he was close to one of the wagons, and then the big dog began to bark furiously again.

In a moment more the fellow disappeared.

That was the last Harry saw of him.

"Gone!" muttered Young King Brady. "He must be among the band now. Inquiries there will be useless. Gypsies are notorious liars. If I go among them and inquire for the man they will all swear that he hasn't been away from the encampment. But I must do my best. I'll tackle them."

He hastened down in the hollow.

As he reached the nearest wagon a scowling gypsy leaped from behind a tree, confronted him, and demanded in surly, panting tones:

"Well, sir, what do you want here?"

Harry recognized him at a glance as Rocco.

The man was out of breath, as if from running, and the boy exclaimed:

"I want you!"

"Me? What for?"

"Haven't I been chasing you?"

"No. I never saw you before, sir."

"Don't lie. You are all out of breath from running."

"Yes; I was after a man."

"You mean Maximo Velasquez, of course?"

A surprised look crossed Rocco's dark face.

But he answered unhesitatingly:

"Yes, that's the man. But how did you know?"

"I am a detective; so is my partner. We were watching your meeting with the Spaniard and listening to your conversation with him."

"Ha! Did you do that?"

"Yes; and we overheard your plot."

"Thunder! That's bad."

"You can just bet it is."

"Well, I was after him again," said Rocco. "After parting with him I suddenly thought of something additional I wished to say. I ran after him. He was gone. Then I ran back here. That's why I'm breathless."

"Humbug! You can't fool me," said Harry, skeptically. "You got a flash of that big diamond he carried. It aroused your cupidity. You could not wait to earn it by abducting little Dottie Fairfax. Therefore you ran after him and struck a dagger in his heart. When you murdered the man you robbed the corpse and secured that diamond."

"Do you mean to tell me Velasquez has been murdered?"

"I do; and what's more, you are the man who killed him."

"You lie! I didn't! I failed to find him!"

"See here, Rocco, you can't blind me to the facts."

"I'm telling you the truth."

"Oh, pshaw! I don't believe you."

"Is it possible he was killed and robbed of that great diamond?"

"Yes, and you knew it, too."

"I didn't. I swear to you I didn't."

"You'll have to submit to arrest, just the same."

"For what?"

"For murder."

"But I deny doing it."

"I don't care what you deny. You are my prisoner."

A startled look flashed over the gypsy's face, and he cried: "And I refuse to submit!"

"Then I'll have to use force, Rocco."

"Move hand or foot at your peril!" hissed the gypsy.

He whipped out a revolver and aimed it at Harry's head. The boy recoiled.

"Hands up!" exclaimed Rocco.

Young King Brady obeyed with alacrity.

He had no desire to get shot.

The gypsy viewed him with a grim smile for a moment and walking over to the boy, he disarmed him.

"You are my prisoner now!" exclaimed Rocco.

"What are you going to do with me?" demanded the boy.

"I have not decided yet, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Brady."

"Oh, are you one of the Bradys?"

"I am Young King Brady."

"I've heard of you and your partner."

"You'll know more about us ere this case is ended."

"Well, I'll tell you one thing—you won't defeat my plans."

"That's a question the future will decide."

The gypsy laughed and vented a peculiar whistle. It was a warning.

Instantly several of the men in the camp ran over to them.

"What's the trouble?" asked one of them.

"Bind this detective," replied Rocco, gruffly.

He was the leader of this band, and the men obeyed his orders without hesitation by securing Harry with a piece of rope.

The boy was bound hand and foot.

When he was thus secured Rocco said:

"Lift him into one of the wagons."

This was done.

The gypsies then went away.

A lantern hung from the top of the covered wagon.

Glancing around, Young King Brady observed that the vehicle was fitted up with a number of bunks for sleeping purposes.

Sitting on a box at the farther end was the beautiful gypsy girl called Posey, and she was looking at Harry with surprise.

The boy carefully sized her up.

She was about eighteen years old, had a fine figure, clad in a picturesque costume, and wore a figured silk handkerchief over her beautiful, wavy black hair.

The girl was very dark skinned.

She had beautiful big dark eyes, heavy black eyebrows and wore big gold hoop earrings.

"Well," she exclaimed, "what have you been doing to warrant our men to make a prisoner of you in this manner?"

"Nothing wrong," replied the boy. "If you'll cut these bonds I'll give you one hundred dollars. I must get free!"

Like all gypsies Posey was very avaricious.

She impulsively drew a knife from her pocket to do as Harry asked, in order to win the reward he offered.

Before she could do so, however, Rocco sprang into the wagon, seized her arm, and roared in furious tones:

"Stop. Are you mad? I'll kill you if you release him."

"But the money—one hundred dollars!" gasped the girl, as she cowered back with a scared look on her face.

"Nonsense! He hasn't got it. He was duping you. Once he gets free we all go to jail, and I, perhaps, to the gallows."

"For what?" asked Posey, in tones of alarm.

"He is a detective. A murder has been committed near by, and he accuses me of committing it."

"Oh, Rocco! Did you?"

"No, no, Posey. I swear it."

"Then your safety demands his being kept a prisoner?"

"Yes. At least until we can gain a fortune I want you to help me to get. When that is in our hands I may let the boy go."

"What fortune do you refer to?"

"Come outside and I'll tell you about it."

They left the wagon.

Harry was deeply disappointed, and his last hope of escaping from the gypsies left him.

He placed the knife in his pocket.

This done, he muttered:

"All the evidence shows that robbery was the motive of this crime. Velasquez has fallen a victim of his own rascality. He smuggled the diamond, and Rocco was the only person to whom he showed it. The gypsy was frantic when he saw the gem, and evidently made up his mind to get it right away. With that purpose in view he must have waylaid Velasquez and killed him to rob him of the stone. Let me see if he left any other clew to his identity around here."

Old King Brady had a dark lantern in his pocket.

He withdrew it and lit the wick.

Going down close to the ground, he flashed the lantern's rays about, and carefully examined the soil.

He failed to see anything but the murderer's footprints, however, and when he looked at them critically he was astonished to see that they resembled the marks which would have been left by a woman's shoe.

"By Jove!" he muttered. "What does this mean? Could the murderer have been a woman in man's clothing? I am sure Rocco had no such little foot as this. In fact, I noticed that he wore big, clumsy boots, fully a size 9. After all, the murderer may not have been Rocco Zingari."

The marks he saw were plainly imprinted in the soft soil.

There were only the footprints of three people to be seen—one his own, another made by the square-toed gaiters worn by the dead man, and the others were marks such as a woman's shoe would leave. And they puzzled the officer.

He took a pencil and paper from his pocket and made several tracings of the small footprints.

The sole was short, narrow and pointed; there was no mark of the shank, which showed it must have arched high, and the heel was small and sharp, of the kind called "military."

Old King Brady studied the imprints.

Measuring them from side to side and end to end, he muttered:

"No doubt a woman's shoe. But she had a big foot. This print would have been about a number five man's size. That would be something like a six, woman's size. If it wasn't Rocco who left the tracks it was a big woman."

Sure that the criminal left no other clew, the old detective returned to the body of the consul's secretary.

He lay on his back.

"I'd better get it out of the park," Old King Brady muttered at length. "I'll carry it out to the 110th street entrance and put it in the hands of the police. Then I'll go and look for Harry. The boy may need my aid, or he may have run down the criminal. I'll see."

He was a very strong man.

CHAPTER IV.

STRANGE FOOTPRINTS.

Left alone with the corpse of Maximo Velasquez in the lonely glen, Old King Brady carefully examined the body.

The murderer had robbed the Spaniard of all his valuables.

Every pocket had been emptied.

The detective withdrew the dagger from the wound.

It had a thin glass blade, and was as sharp as a needle.

"An Italian weapon," commented the old detective, as he examined it. "It is customary to stab men with these daggers and snap off the handle, leaving the blade buried in the body. The lips of the wound close up, and scarcely any trace is left of how the man dies. It's an odd weapon. There are few in this country. It may serve as a clew to the identity of the murderer. I'll keep it."

Stooping, he picked up the body and carried it out to the road.

Following this path with his burden, he soon reached the entrance, and there encountered a policeman.

They were acquainted, and the patrolman cried in surprise:

"Why, Old King Brady!"

"Hello! Is that you, Harper?"

"What have you got there, Mr. Brady?"

"A corpse."

"A dead man? Good Lor'! Suicide?"

"No; a case of murder."

"Where was he killed—in the park?"

"Yes. The murderer robbed him."

"Good gracious! Who did it?"

"Can't tell yet. Harry is chasing the criminal."

"What's to be done about it?"

"You can summon the wagon and have the body taken to the morgue. I'll give you the particulars so you can turn in a report about the trouble. Then I'll go back after Harry."

"All right, sir. I'll attend to it."

"Then listen," said Old King Brady, as he laid the body down on the ground, and he merely told how he happened to find the body.

He did not give the details which led up to his discovery, as he did not want the police department to interfere with him.

When his story was finished the policeman said:

"It's a mysterious case, ain't it?"

"Very," assented Old King Brady, nodding. "He was evidently killed for money, and I think we shall have his murderer before the night is over."

"I hope you will, Mr. Brady."

"Now I'll leave you."

He hastened back into the park, deeply thinking.

"If Rocco was the criminal," he argued, "he would naturally run back to his encampment, and lead Harry there. If the boy has a tussle with him the whole band will very likely aid Rocco. That will put Harry up against strong odds, and they may defeat the boy. If they do, he will need me badly. My course is to go straight to the encampment first."

With this plan in view he plunged in among the trees.

It did not take him long to get back to the hollow, and he glanced down at the wagons, and saw that the camp fire had died out.

The encampment had a deserted look.

And it was no wonder.

Rocco had theorized with his followers that when Harry

did not return Old King Brady would come to look for him.

As the gypsy feared trouble from the old detective, sent his men to the top of the hill on all sides of the hollow to keep watch for the coming of the detective.

The wisdom of this move became apparent when Rocco himself caught view of the old sleuth come stealing through the woods toward the top of the hill.

As the gypsies had a system of secret signals, Rocco gave utterance to the peculiar cry of a night bird.

So well done was it that no one would have suspected that the sound was made by a human being.

The cry brought all the other gypsies toward Rocco in great hurry, and they not only escaped Old King Brady's observation, but they had the officer pointed out to them.

"It's Old King Brady," whispered Rocco to the band as he pointed to the manhunter, "and our safety depends upon our capturing and holding that man a prisoner."

"Easily done," answered one of the men.

"Don't hold him too cheap," warned Rocco. "He is strong as a bull. He don't know what fear is. Unless you catch him off his guard you'll have a terrible fight with him."

"Then let us surround him and hold him up with our pistols."

"Very well. Try it."

Like shadows they got around Old King Brady, who stood like a statue peering down at the deserted encampment.

Seeing everything ready, Rocco shouted roughly:

"Old King Brady!"

With a violent start the old detective wheeled around and saw the six men standing around him in a semi-circle with their pistols aimed at his head, and their eyes glancing over the sights.

"In a trap!" the old detective muttered.

He did not lose his nerve for an instant.

Up went the revolver he clutched in his hand, covering Rocco.

"Fool!" said the gypsy chief, with a jeering laugh. "You can't escape."

"If any of your gang move an inch," replied the old detective, in cool, measured tones, "I shall kill you, if I perceive the next moment."

The gypsies were dismayed to hear this.

When Rocco finally recovered his composure he gasped:

"You've got to submit. The odds against you are great."

"We'll see about that," quietly answered the gallant officer.

He meant to give them a hard fight.

But, unluckily for this plan, one of the gypsy's sons just then came up behind him and hurled a stone with unerring aim.

It struck Old King Brady on the back of the head, and he uttered a deep groan, flung up his hands and fell senseless to the ground.

With a yell of joy, the whole gang rushed at him, and in a few moments more he was bound and gagged and they carried him away.

CHAPTER V.

KIDNAPING THE CHILD.

On the following morning, about nine o'clock, Posey Zingari rang the bell of a fine mansion on Fifth avenue, and a servant admitted her.

She was plainly and neatly clad, and when the chambermaid ushered her into the magnificent parlor and asked her business, she said:

"I've called in answer to Mrs. Fairfax's advertisement for a nurse maid."

"Sure an' yer ther first wan ter call," said the servant. "An' what's more, I don't belave annywan else will come, for ther wages she mitioned is so shmall no wan wants ther job."

"Wages ain't as much wanted by me as a good home," said Posey, who was as great a liar as most of her race are.

"Tell me yer name, an' I'll sind ther missus down ter yer."

"My name is Posey Zingari."

"Sure an' it's a dago yer are, ain't ye?"

"I'm of Italian extraction."

"Yer look it, wid that black mug," muttered the chambermaid as she left the room and ran upstairs.

Miss Posey glanced around the elegant parlor with a look of great admiration, for she had never before seen anything so luxurious and expensive as the furnishing of this room.

There were some handsome gold ornaments on a magnificent inlaid cabinet, and the gypsy girl glided over to them, cast a swift glance around, and seeing no one looking, she put them in her pocket.

Scarcely had this been done when the portieres were swept aside and a beautiful young woman in rich clothing entered.

She was Mrs. Fairfax, the wealthy jeweler's wife.

Her sudden entrance frightened the wicked gypsy girl into the belief that her pilfering had been detected.

But one quick glance at Mrs. Fairfax's placid face reassured her, and she smiled blandly, bowed low, and asked:

"Is this Mrs. Fairfax?"

"That is my name. And you are Posey Zingari, I presume?"

"Yes, ma'am. I came to get the position of nurse girl."

"So I was told. Have you had any experience before?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," lied Posey. "I was in my last place for two years."

"Then you can give good reference?"

"Of course I can. But I have no recommendation with me."

"Well, that don't make much difference. Who did you work for?"

"Mrs. Karn, the wife of the great steel works owner of Pittsburg."

"Indeed. You must be a good nurse to hold such a position."

"Oh, I understand children," said Posey modestly. "But I did not like it there, as my family live in New York and are very poor. I could not impose on them by living at their house, so I came to get this position. Money is not so much an object to me as a good home, and the quicker I go to work the better for me."

"Well," said Mrs. Fairfax, "I candidly admit I like your dark little gypsy face, and your reference is first rate. If you like I'll put you to work at once on trial, and in the meantime I can write to your former employer for reference. How will that do?"

"First rate," said Posey, who was secretly delighted with the arrangement.

"Very well; you can consider yourself engaged, Posey."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"I'll get Nora to show you your room presently."

"But the child," said Posey. "Is it a boy or girl?"

"A little girl. Her name is Dottie. She is a very nice child, five years old, and you will have but little trouble with her."

"Can I see her, ma'am?"

"Yes; I'll call her."

Mrs. Fairfax was about to summon her little daughter, but was saved the trouble, for just then there sounded the patter of footsteps in the hall, and a sweet childish voice called out:

"Mamma! Mamma! Where are you?"

"In the parlor, darling. Come in here."

The next moment a vision in white flashed into the room with a mellow, silvery laugh, and darted over to the lady.

It was little Dottie Fairfax.

She was a beautiful child, with long, yellow curls, big

blue eyes, and rosebud lips. Her skin was pure white, and a sweet smile dimpled her red cheeks and made her eyes sparkle.

The moment she saw Posey a bashful look crossed her face and she half hid in the folds of her mother's dress.

"Oh!" exclaimed the gypsy girl in gushing tones, "what a sweet, beautiful little fairy! So she is to be my charge?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Fairfax, smiling with pleasure at the compliment to her little daughter, "and I think you will like her better when you become acquainted with her."

"Won't you come here and give me a kiss, Dottie?" asked the gypsy girl, holding out her arms to the child.

The little one glanced into the big, black eyes of the Romany girl, and as the smile fled from her face it gave place to an expression of great terror, and she drew back.

An instinctive feeling of aversion for the gypsy overcame her.

She seemed to know that Posey was wicked and designing, and, true to nature, she shrank from her.

"No!" she cried. "I don't like you!"

Mrs. Fairfax was shocked.

Her child was not bearing out the nice reputation she had given Dottie to the prospective new nurse maid.

Dottie's actions filled her mother with mortification.

"Why, Dottie!" she cried, reprovingly. "Is that the way to behave? You are a naughty little girl! Go and kiss the young woman. She is going to be your maid."

"No, I won't!" rebelled the child. "She ain't nice! I don't like the way she looks. See how her eyes shine! She has eyes like the snakes I saw in the circus."

"My goodness!" gasped Mrs. Fairfax in deep chagrin. "What has come over the child? I never knew her to act this way before."

For an instant a furious look of hate darted from Posey's dark eyes upon the child. It was a threatening expression, and when the child saw it she shrank further back, greatly alarmed.

Posey checked her feelings by a desperate effort.

When she met the lady's glance there was a hypocritical smile on her dusky face, and she said:

"Oh, never mind. It's all right. I'm strange to her. When she gets used to me, we shall be great friends, I'm sure. It isn't strange she don't take to me. I'm glad she don't. It isn't safe for little children to get familiar with strangers all at once. She's a dear little dove and I love her already. I'll win her over, you'll see. She will soon grow to love me."

"I hope so, Posey," said the jeweler's wife apologetically, "for she is really a very nicely behaved child, and it makes

me feel bad to see her hurt your feelings in this strange manner."

The girl Nora was then called and told to show Posey her room, and when the gypsy girl was gone Mrs. Fairfax went up to the library and wrote a note to Mrs. Karn Pittsburg, asking about the character of Posey Zingari.

The letter was mailed.

But it would take two days for it to go and for the answer to come back. And the reply was going to be that Mrs. Karn did not know Posey Zingari, and that she had never worked as a nurse maid for the steel magnate's children.

Posey had this all figured out.

She expected to have ample time to steal the child before the answer was returned, and thus end her part in the mystery plot.

She was a deep, subtle girl, and during the day she had won little Dottie and made the most desperate efforts to become friendly with her.

Having some chocolate bonbons, she gave them to Dottie and promised her more the next day if she would become friendly.

As the child was very fond of that particular candy, and Posey was very kind and affectionate to her, she was finally won over.

When Mr. Fairfax returned home in the evening he found his pretty little daughter lying in the gypsy maid's lap kissing her.

Although the jeweler took an instinctive dislike to Posey at first sight, when he observed how good she was to his child, and how Dottie seemed to love her, he smothered his resentment and said:

"She must be a mighty good girl or Dottie would not take to her in that fashion."

On the following day, as the weather was fine, Mrs. Fairfax asked Posey to take her child out for an airing in the park.

This was just what the gypsy girl wanted.

She assented, and with a nice white apron on, and a lace cap on her head, she put the child in her go-cart and started off.

Mrs. Fairfax stood in the window blowing kisses to her laughing child, and Posey and Dottie smiled back at her as they passed into the park and disappeared from view.

And that was the last Mrs. Fairfax saw of her child for a long time.

Posey pushed the go-cart on ahead of her, and once she was out of her mistress' sight she walked as fast as possible.

On, on she went, and she did not pause until she reached the encampment at One Hundred and Tenth street.

When Rocco and the band saw how successful she had

been they were delighted, and preparations for departure were made with the greatest of speed.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP.

In the meantime the Bradys had been kept prisoners inside of one of the wagons, unable to make their escape.

On the morning when little Dottie Fairfax was kidnaped the newspapers contained a startling account of the murder mystery of Central Park upon which the Bradys were engaged.

As it was not known where the body of Maximo Velasquez was found, the police could not do anything about the matter.

They thought the Bradys were busy on the case, and therefore knew it would be useless for them to interfere.

Consequently the gypsies remained unseen and unmolested in their retreat down in the hollow by the pond side.

If the murder created a sensation that day, the abduction of Dottie Fairfax created a greater one the day after.

As hour after hour passed by and Posey Zingar did not return to the Fairfax mansion with her little charge, the mother of the child became greatly worried.

She nervously sent the other servants out to look for the missing ones, and night fell before they came back, empty-handed, and sorrowfully reported that they saw nothing of the child and its nurse.

When Mr. Fairfax came home he was frantic.

He called up police headquarters on the telephone in his house and reported the entire matter to the chief.

Police, wardmen and detectives from every precinct were sent out to scour the city and the park in quest of the lost child.

The newspapers issued extras, and every one in New York was cast into a state of nervous excitement over the matter.

Few crimes excite such widespread comment as a kidnapping case, for it appeals to the sympathy of every parent and arouses the most violent resentment.

The case of Dottie Fairfax was no exception to the rule.

Even a squad of detectives from the Secret Service was sent out to run down the abductor and recover the child.

Expecting some such sensation as this, Rocco and his band had stolen away in the night and carried the Bradys with them.

The gypsy king had laid a cunning plan with his followers to avoid detection and arrest, for they proceeded all night up into the Bronx district, and joined another tribe camping in the woods on the outskirts of Mount Vernon.

This party was under the command of an old queen who told fortunes, to whom Rocco related what he had done.

Swearing them all to secrecy, the rascal bundled up the sleeping child so it would not be recognized, and scattering his band, he took Posey with him, and they went away for parts unknown.

One of the band had kept aloof with the wagon in which the Bradys were confined, so the detectives would not know what was being done.

This man drove on to White Plains with the detectives.

Here, at daylight, he took them from the wagon, bound and gagged, tied them each to a tree in the woods, and drove away.

The Bradys were in a frantic state of mind.

They did not know that Dottie Fairfax had been stolen.

For hours they had to remain standing where they were bound, unable to help themselves, and wondering what their fate was to be.

Toward nightfall a man came through the woods with a rifle over his shoulder, looking for rabbits.

When he saw the two detectives he paused, a cry of surprise escaped him, and, staring at them with starting eyes, he cried:

"By jimminey! What does this mean?"

Receiving no reply, he stared at the pair harder, and observed that they were gagged.

"Prisoners!" he muttered, laying down his gun. "This is outrageous! Who could have done it? 'Spose I hadn't come along. These poor fellows would have perished of hunger."

He released them and took off the gags.

The Bradys warmly thanked him.

"It's lucky for us you happened to come this way," said Harry, as he stretched his cramped arms. "By jingo! we've been having a hard time of it, I can tell you."

"Who did this?" demanded the hunter.

"A band of gypsies."

"To rob you?"

"No. To get rid of us. We are detectives."

"Oh, I see! You were after them, eh?"

"That's the case exactly."

"Well, you ought to catch them and make them sweat for this."

"That's what we intend to do. Where are we?"

"Near White Plains."

"Far enough from New York," growled Old King Brady.

"Do you know where the gypsies are?"

"No. But we'll get on their trail as soon as we can."

"You'd better get into town and get something to eat first."

"As we are very hungry, that's just what we shall do."

The man directed them to White Plains and they left him.

As they strode away Harry asked his partner:

"How in the world are we going to find those villains?"

"I've detected one method already," replied the old detective.

"What is it?"

"Come back in the woods and I'll show you."

They returned to where they were bound to the trees and Old King Brady pointed at some wheel ruts in the ground and said:

"These were made by the wagon we rode in."

"Sure enough! But I don't see the other wagon marks."

"That's because only one wagon came this way, Harry."

"What did they do with the other?"

"Must have left it back the road. Let's follow this one and see where it goes. When we get it located we can get a couple of saddle horses and follow the wagon marks back in the direction it came from. It will perhaps lead us to where the other wagon is. As Rocco and his gang must be in the other wagon, we can thus find the villains without a great deal of trouble."

"Very well," assented the boy.

They thereupon tracked the wagon.

It led them to the town.

In fact, they traced it directly to a blacksmith and wheelwright's shop, and found the vehicle standing at his door.

The owner of the place stood smoking a pipe and reading a newspaper inside the shed.

He glanced up as the Bradys approached, nodded, and said:

"Good evening, gents. Anything I can do for you to-day?"

"We'd like to find out where you got that wagon," replied Harry, pointing at the gypsy's vehicle.

"Just bought it to-day," replied the blacksmith.

"From a gypsy?"

"I don't know what he was, but he looked like one."

"Did he sell his horses, too?"

"Yes. I bought the whole rig, as it was a big bargain, and he was anxious to get rid of the things."

"Do you know what became of him?"

"No. Didn't take notice."

"We are anxious to meet that fellow."

"Why? Did he do you any harm?"

"No," replied Harry. "Want to see him on business. We'd like to hire a pair of saddle horses. Where can we get them?"

"Why, I can let you have a couple, but I don't know who you are."

"Well," said Harry, with a smile, "we are known as the Bradys, Secret Service detectives, and if you will send the horses over to your police station, I'm sure your chief will vouch for us."

"Very well," said the blacksmith. "That will satisfy me. I'll do it."

"Thank you very much."

"And so you are the great detectives I've been reading about just now?"

"You were reading about us?"

"In the Herald. See here."

He handed over the paper he had been perusing, and they saw an item about the murder of Maximo Velasquez, in which it was said the Bradys were on the murderer's trail, which accounted for their sudden and mysterious disappearance from the city.

Just as Harry was about to return the paper his glance fell upon an account of the abduction of baby Fairfax.

The startled boy read it through.

It was a full and detailed account of the whole incident.

When he finished he handed it over to his partner said:

"By thunder! the child-stealers have carried out plan successfully."

"What!" gasped Old King Brady, and he quickly the article. When he finished he glanced significant Harry and said:

"I guess this accounts for Rocco's sudden departure the park with his gang and our sequestration in the woods."

"We've got a double task on our hands now," replied Harry, "for, as we know all about the matter, it will involve upon us to run down the kidnapers and recover little girl."

And so saying they walked away to get something to eat.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OLD FORTUNE-TELLER.

When the Bradys satisfied their hunger they proceeded to police headquarters and had a conversation with the chief.

He was well acquainted with the pair, and listened with deep interest to their recital of what had happened to them.

They exacted a promise from him to keep a lookout for the man who had driven them to White Plains in the wagon, and when they finished speaking Harry rang up Secret Service headquarters in New York and asked for his chief.

When that functionary responded, he asked:

"Who am I talking to?"

"The Bradys," replied Harry.

"Good! Where are you?"

"In White Plains."

"Good Lord! What are you doing there?"

Harry detailed everything that happened to them from the time he had left them shadowing Velasquez in White Plains street.

When he finished, he said in addition:

"We've read that the gypsies have succeeded in abducting Dottie Fairfax, as they plotted with Velasquez to do."

"Yes, and the whole city is in a furor of excitement over it."

"Have the police found any clews yet?"

"Not one. After the girl vanished from Mrs. Fairfax's view inside of Central Park no one seems to have seen where she became of them."

"They must have gone to the gypsy camp."

"Of course," assented the chief.

"As the camp is broken, of course they must be with the gang who carried us away," said Harry.

"No doubt of it. Can you find them?"

"We've got a chance."

"Then follow up your clew."

"Very well, sir."

"Let me hear from you again."

"We shall very likely be in the city to-morrow."

"All right, Harry."
 "Have the abductors made any demand for ransom yet?"
 "No; but I expect they will very soon."
 "If they do, try to find out where the letter comes from, it will be a guide for us to find the villains."

After some further conversation Harry hung up the receiver.

Just then the blacksmith came in to find out if the detectives were responsible men to let his horses to.

The police captain assured him that they were all right, and he promised to send the horses around to the hotel at which they were going to stop, early in the morning.

When he was gone the captain asked the detectives:

"What do you want with those saddle horses?"

"To follow the trail left by the gypsies' wagon wheels, in order to locate the rest of the gang," answered Harry.

"Do you think you can do it?"

"We will try, as we really don't know where we came from," said Harry. "They kept us concealed inside the wagon."

"I see. Well, I wish you luck."

They finally separated and put up at a hotel.

Fortunately for them, the gypsies had not robbed them anything but their pistols, and they had money to pay their expenses and to purchase new revolvers and ammunition.

On the following morning the blacksmith brought a bay and a gray horse, two pairs of spurs and two riding whips for them.

The detectives were good horsemen.

After breakfast they mounted and rode away.

It was a fine, clear day, and when they reached the woods they soon found the wagon ruts, and followed them up.

As the gypsy driver was anxious to avoid being seen, he had kept his team in the soft ground bordering the road, and took advantage of the woods, hills, bushes and rocks as much as possible.

He thus unconsciously left a clear trail for the Bradys to follow.

It led them to Mount Vernon.

Here, close to the Bronx River, they suddenly came upon a gypsy camp at which Rocco and his gang had paused.

And the first thing they saw and recognized was the old wagon Rocco had left there with his friends.

It was a picturesque camp nestling among some trees, between green verdure and a blue ridge rising in the background.

Two tents were pitched under the spreading branches of some huge cedars, there were several house-wagons scattered about, and a heap of lumber with an ax stuck in a log lay close to the stream. Five rough-looking gypsy men were lounging about the place, and a beautiful gypsy girl in a red dress, with a lace scarf knotted around her neck, stood holding open the flap of a tent.

A chair stood before her, in which sat the old fortune teller, with a dotted bandanna tied over her head.

She was petting a huge hound, which the Bradys recognized as the beast Rocco had in his camp. The brute was secured to the tent.

After a sharp survey, Harry remarked:

"None of these people belong to Rocco's gang."

"That wagon and hound are his," Old King Brady remarked.

"Yes; he has evidently left them here."

"Oh, he may be hidden here himself."

"We will soon find out by searching the place," said Harry, as he dismounted from his horse.

Just then the old gypsy queen cried in whining tones:

"Have the good gentlemen come to have their fortune told?"

"Yes," said Harry with a smile, and a wink at his partner. "We are on a dangerous journey, and it makes us anxious to know if we are going to have good or bad fortune. Can you tell me?"

"Easily—Heasily, good sir," replied the old hag; "but the gentlemen must cross the gypsy's palm with a silver dollar to have her read the future, and open up the past."

"Very well, old lady," said the boy, producing a coin from his pocket and marking a cross on her hand with it. "Go ahead with the revelation."

Old King Brady remained astride of his horse.

He observed the gypsies keenly scanning the beasts.

Harry thrust out his hand, and the old woman grasped his fingers, and pointed at his palm as she said:

"Now make a wish."

"Hum!" coughed the boy, reflecting. "What shall it be?"

He pondered gravely a moment, and then nodded.

"Did you make it?" asked the woman.

"I did. Proceed."

The old fortune teller examined Young King Brady's palm intently for a moment, and then, pointing at the line, said:

"Young man, you are on the right track; your quest will be successful, but very dangerous."

"Indeed!" replied Harry. "Is that all?"

"Oh, no. I can see a great fortune coming to you. It will be announced by a blue letter coming from over the water. A beautiful blonde girl is very much in love with you. This is the girl you will marry. But there's a dark stranger interfering. He is trying to poison her mind against you. In the end you will defeat him."

"How nice," chuckled Harry.

He tried to withdraw his hand, but the old hag kept a grip on it like a vise, and she demanded in rasping tones:

"What are you doing? I ain't through yet."

"I don't want to hear any more," said Harry. "Let go!"

"No, I won't."

"Why won't you?"

"Because!" grimly answered the old hag, and she suddenly bounded to her feet, and seized Harry's other hand.

Apprehending treachery, Harry struggled to get free.

"Look out!" he shouted to his partner.

Just then two of the men rushed at Old King Brady, seized him, and pulled him from his horse.

The others went to the assistance of the fortune teller. In a moment a furious struggle was going on.

The Bradys did not know why they were attacked until they heard one of the men shout:

"Yes, them is the two horses belonging to Rocco, that Bendigo drove away with, and they've swiped them."

"Beat the life out of them!" yelled the old hag fiercely. "They're thieves. They must have stolen them nags. I recognized the animals long before they reached us."

Just then Harry drew his pistol.

"Back with you!" he shouted, leveling the weapon at them.

A yell of dismay escaped the ones who were struggling with him, and they rushed away pell mell.

That gave Old King Brady a chance to get out his weapon, and a shot he fired over his antagonists' heads scattered them like a flock of frightened sheep.

In a moment more the detectives were side by side, decidedly masters of the situation.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOY AGAINST HOUND.

"Harry," remarked Old King Brady, "we must search this camp as thoroughly as possible to find Rocco and his band."

"I don't believe any of them are here," replied the young detective.

"What makes you think that?"

"Because if they were it seems to me the noise of the fight would have brought them from under cover."

"That's a reasonable idea."

They glanced around, and saw that most of the men had fled into the woods, while the females took refuge in the tents.

"We own the place!" chuckled Old King Brady.

"So it seems. Those horses we hired of the blacksmith were the cause of the trouble. It seems that they are the very beasts he purchased of Bendigo, the man who drove us to White Plains. These chaps imagined we stole them from him, and engaged in a fight so they could recover the animals."

"That's quite evident."

"Where has the old woman gone?"

"Into the tent."

"Let's capture her and try to pump her."

They ran toward the old queen's abode, but before they reached it she appeared at the entrance with a fierce look on her withered face.

"Stand where you are!" she screamed, shaking her bony fist at them. "Stop, I say, or the curse of Zmaranda, the gypsy queen, will blight your lives forever!"

Checked by the fierce impulse of her words, the Bradys paused and glanced at her. She was trembling with passion.

Her dark eyes blazed like live coals of fire, and there was a prophetic ring to her voice that sent cold chills through them.

"See here, old lady," growled Old King Brady in menacing tones, "we respect your sex and age, and we don't want to hurt you, but, by thunder, we are going to look for you where Rocco and his friends have gone, or we will make it mighty hot for you here."

Zmaranda looked startled.

She flashed a quick, keen glance at them and demanded:

"Why do you want Rocco?"

"To arrest him and Posey for murder and abduction."

"Ha! Then you are officers of the law?"

"We are the Bradys!"

Again the old queen gave a start of surprise.

Rocco had told her who his prisoners were the night previous, and she now knew for the first time who these men were.

It quickly flashed over her mind that they somehow got free, and perhaps had made away with Bendigo.

She therefore exclaimed:

"Didn't you steal that team?"

"No," replied Harry. "We hired those horses."

"Who from?"

"A man in White Plains to whom Bendigo sold them."

"Ah! I see. We were mistaken—thought you were thieves."

"No, indeed; we are not thieves."

"That's why we attacked you. We wished to recover our team."

"We know that now."

"You had better leave our camp at once."

"Not till we learn where Rocco and Posey are."

"You will never get the information from me."

"Don't be obstinate. We don't want to have trouble with you. You know where they went, and we demand of you to tell us."

"I'll do nothing of the sort."

"Then we shall have to arrest you, Zmaranda."

"If you come one step nearer to this tent you'll regret it."

"You will find we will enter it, Madam."

As Harry made this threat he took a step nearer, and as quick as a flash, Zmaranda drew a knife from her bosom.

She stooped and slashed the rope holding the big hound.

"Go for them, Prince!" she cried.

With a fierce growl the huge beast leaped from the tent and made a furious rush at the detectives.

Harry paused and felt for the pistol he had thrust in his pocket.

But he had no time to draw it out.

The beast was too near.

It gave a savage growl, and sprang at his throat.

Harry flung up his hands, and warded off the brute by seizing it by the neck; but the force with which it plunged forward hurled the boy over backward to the ground.

He struck on his back.

The hound was on top of him.

The beast was snarling and snapping, tearing at him with its great paws, and using every effort to sink its formidable fangs into the young detective.

Harry fought it off with all his strength.
It was as much as he could do to prevent the savage beast from tearing him to pieces.

Over and over they rolled on the ground, and the dirt flew in all directions as the fierce struggle went on.

Old King Brady was alarmed.

He got out his revolver and circled around the fighters, looking for a chance to put a bullet in the dog.

But he feared to hit Harry.

In the meantime, Zmaranda watched the contest gloatingly.

She was delighted at the fierce attack of the hound, and encouraged him on to greater exertions by shouting:

"Sic him, Prince! Go for him, dog! Rip him to pieces!"

Old King Brady glared angrily at her, and finally shouted:

"Shut up, you old fiend, or I'll shoot you instead of the brute."

"You don't dare!" tauntingly cried the old fortune teller. Just then the detective saw his chance.

The hound had its body turned toward him.

He took quick aim and pulled the trigger.

Bang! went the shot, and the ball pierced the dog's body.

It gave a hoarse howl of agony, wrenched itself out of Harry's grip, and sped away whining horribly with pain.

Up jumped Harry, cut, scratched and bruised.

He was covered with dirt from head to foot, and he was panting hard for breath, but felt intensely relieved.

"Good for you!" he cried.

"Are you badly hurt?" asked his partner.

"No. I've got some fight left in me yet."

"Get out your gun quick; the hound is coming back."

The boy obeyed.

Old King Brady had seen the dog lick its wound.

It was a malicious brute, and seemed intent upon vengeance, for it glared at the old fellow and rushed for him.

Its teeth were bared and its eyes were bloodshot, frothing its massive jaws, and it had a menacing air.

Harry raised his pistol.

Aiming at the hound's head, he fired.

True to its mark sped the bullet, crashing into the dog's brain, and, uttering a deep growl, the animal fell dead in its tracks.

"Bull's-eye!" cried Harry.

Zmaranda had witnessed the fatal shot with emotions of rage and alarm, for she had been counting on the dog protecting her.

The moment the beast went down Old King Brady rushed into the tent, and, as the old fortune teller cowered back, he thundered:

"Now you'll submit to arrest, for the hound is dead."

"I won't go with you!" gasped the woman, doggedly.

"Then confess."

"Sooner than go to jail I'll obey you."

"Well, no lies, either, mind you."

"Rocco and Posey have the child, and have taken her to Canada."

"Do you know where they are to be found?"

"Yes. In Montreal."

"What street?"

"I don't know."

Old King Brady bent a keen glance upon her.

He wanted to see whether she was telling the truth or not.

The result of his scrutiny did not please him much, for as she was so greatly agitated he could not tell much about her sincerity.

Finding it useless, he asked:

"Do you know if Rocco killed Velasquez?"

"He swore he didn't."

"Naturally; but they have the Spaniard's big diamond."

"You are mistaken. If he had that he certainly would not have been so desperately hard up that he would steal the child for ransom."

"Zmaranda, your argument is a sensible one."

"What more do you want?"

"Nothing, except to know where Rocco's gang is."

"Scattered. They've gone to join other tribes."

"Then we will leave you. If we find you have lied, remember, we shall come back and put you in prison!"

And they left her, mounted their horses, and rode away.

CHAPTER IX.

A DEMAND FOR RANSOM.

On the following morning, while the Bradys were standing in their chief's office, the door opened and George Fairfax rushed in excitedly.

"Can I see the chief?" he demanded of Harry.

"I'm the man," interposed the head of the division.

"Ah! Glad to meet you, sir. I am Mr. Fairfax."

"Father of the kidnapped child Dottie?"

"Exactly. I've got some startling news."

"Indeed. What is it, sir?"

"A letter from the child stealers."

"Demanding a ransom, of course?"

"Yes. They want \$20,000. If I refuse to pay it, they declare they will cut off my poor baby's fingers and send them to me in an express parcel."

"Horrible!" gasped the chief.

"You may well say so. I am heartbroken."

Mr. Fairfax had such a look of absolute misery upon his face that the sympathy of his hearers was aroused.

"Cheer up," said the chief, consolingly. "They won't dare do that."

"I'm nearly insane with anxiety!" exclaimed the jeweler. Imagine yourself in my position. Isn't it awful? And my poor wife is sick in bed with worry. I tell you, sir, I have a great mind to comply with the demands of those villains, and pay the ransom. I must get my darling child back, or I'll go wild."

"No! No!" cried the chief. "Don't dream of paying

them a cent. You will only encourage other miscreants to play the same game on others if you do. Brace up, and defy them."

"I can't," groaned the unfortunate man. "It's killing me to remain in this dreadful state of suspense and uncertainty so long, and I cannot stand it much longer. What is \$20,000 compared with the life of my beautiful child?"

"That ain't the point. You must have courage to resist them."

Mr. Fairfax nervously paced up and down the office, with a troubled look furrowing his brow, and finally paused again and said:

"Do you want to see the letter?"

"By all means," answered the chief.

"It reached me by mail this morning."

"By mail, eh? Well—that's a good point."

The jeweler took the envelope from his pocket and handed it over.

The Bradys glanced over his shoulders at it.

The first thing the chief did was to examine the postmark.

It bore the stamp of Mount Vernon, and was dated the day previous.

"That don't look as if the abductors were in Canada," said the chief in significant tones to the detectives.

"No," replied Old King Brady. "The gypsy queen lied."

"Open the letter, sir," suggested Harry, who was burning with curiosity to learn what the kidnappers had to say.

The chief withdrew a small piece of dirty wrapping paper covered with pencil writing in a very bad hand.

The note read as follows:

"Georg Farefax i hav gott yure dorter. it wil korst \$20,000.00 fer yu two gett hur back, an' if yu doant pay up i wil send yu hur fingurs kutt orf, bye ixpres pakidge. Now yu hav a weak two pay up, an' yu mus talk thes grean box in a pakidge, an' driv out in a kab wit itt two Salers Hoam in Kathedrel Hights att 12 enny nite this weak, an' doant hev nowboddy alorng. yu kin stop att thee litul bord shantie with thee kab, an' leeve thee munny their. To ours afturwids yu will git bak yure dorter dotty an' if yu bring thee plice i wil kil hur shur. yures trooly,

"roko Zingary, jipsy king."

This sort of letter was no more than the Secret Service men expected Mr. Fairfax would receive in due time.

In fact, they had been expecting to hear from him that the gypsies had sent him some kind of demand for money.

"Can I keep this?" queried the chief.

"Certainly, if you wish to."

"It may aid us in our search."

"Then retain it, by all means, sir."

"It's really what we expected to see all along."

"Do you notice the terrible threat it conveys?"

"That's to be expected."

"If I try to play any tricks on them they will murder her."

"So they threaten. But I have no faith in their threats."

"Recollect what dangerous people gypsies are."

"Oh, we know all about this man, Rocco Zingari."

"Now what do you advise me to do?"

"Make up a parcel of paper to look like money, go to little shanty with it in a cab to-night, and leave it there."

"What good will that do?"

"I'll post some men to watch the place, and nab the first man who appears to get the parcel after you are gone. If rested, we will wring a confession from him and bag the abductors before they can do the child any harm or get away with her."

"But suppose they see you arrest the party who goes for the money, and get away with my child before you can wring the confession."

"No danger of that. Leave the management of this affair to us. Trust us implicitly, Mr. Fairfax, and we will save your child."

"I do trust you, chief, but it's hard to curb one's impatience under the circumstances," said the distressed father.

He left the office presently with the understanding that Old King Brady, disguised, was to drive his cab.

When they were alone Harry said to the chief:

"Ain't I to take any part in the game?"

"Of course you are, my boy."

"What have you designed for me, sir?"

"You shall have charge of half a dozen well-armed officers who must go up there by way of Morris Heights. You must use your own judgment about where you will post them for the best advantage. When the proper time comes, you must arrest the party who calls for the package of money. To save time you must find out on the spot from your prisoner where the child is hidden."

"Very well," replied the boy.

They elaborated the plan, and when they finished the chief said:

"Now, in regard to the murder of Maximo Velasquez."

"What about it, sir?" queried Old King Brady with interest.

"You say you are uncertain that Rocco killed the man."

"We are. Those feminine footprints puzzle us greatly."

"Have you no way of finding out who the party was who ran from you?"

"We might learn by catching any of Rocco's gang."

"I doubt if they'd give their king away to you."

"There's no other way."

"Yes there is."

"How?"

"You made no attempt to see if those footprints ended at the gypsy camp down in the hollow, or whether they proceeded away from there. If one of Rocco's tribe did the job the footprints will end at the camp. If an outsider did the deed you'll find that they go on past the camp, I am positive."

The Bradys had their interest aroused.

Neither had thought before of such a possibility.

"It's a theory well worth investigating," said Harry, "and, as we have some spare time now, we'd better look into it."

The old detective agreed to this plan, and quarter of

hour later they were on their way uptown on the elevated railroad.

It was a clear, sunny day.

Everything favored the work they had in hand.

Reaching that part of the park where they had seen Velasquez lying dead, they found the feminine footprints crossing the glen, and traced them like a couple of bloodhounds.

The marks led them down into the hollow where the camp had been, and a queer circumstance now recurred to Harry's mind.

"I forgot to tell you," he remarked, "that when the slayer of Velasquez reached the gypsy camp, the hound, Prince, began to bark furiously at him. Now, it strikes me that if the man belonged to Rocco's band the dog would have known him, and would not have barked."

"By Jove," replied Old King Brady, "your theory is a good one. I am sorry you did not mention it before, Harry."

"Never thought of it," said the boy.

"Here's where the wagon stood behind which the fugitive disappeared, you said?"

"Yes. And there are his footprints plainly marked, too."

"They go on and skirt the edge of the pond."

They followed the marks.

To their surprise the footprints led them past the spot where the camp had been, up the hill on the other side, and over to the rear end of the park.

Here they led from the park entirely, and were lost in the street.

"It's as plain as day now," said Harry, in tones of deep conviction. "The murderer was not Rocco, for I met him a few minutes after I lost sight of the fugitive. The party who killed Velasquez did not belong to the gypsy camp."

"Then who the deuce could it have been?" asked Old King Brady.

CHAPTER X.

STOPPED ON THE ROAD.

"Harry," said Old King Brady, "I must confess that I am intensely puzzled over these mysterious female footprints."

"There's not the faintest doubt in my mind that they were made by the person who murdered Maximo Velasquez," the boy answered. "By tracing them from the scene of the crime to this end of the park proves conclusively that Rocco is innocent."

"Decidedly. His big foot never made these tracks."

"He had no time to leave the camp, and return when I arrived there," said Harry, "for I was close behind the fleeing murderer, and as soon as I reached the gypsy camp Rocco confronted me."

"I've made an exact drawing of these footprints," said Old King Brady. "It may be useful to us some day."

"We may as well admit that we are both rattled."

"Oh, I don't deny that I am. The only absolute clews we

have that may lead to the identity of the murderer are the dagger and these prints."

"Could anybody else have known that the Spanish Consul's private secretary had that big fifty-karat diamond, which he smuggled ashore from the purser of the steamer Newport?"

"I doubt it. We had him in view from the moment he left the vessel and did not see him show it to anybody except Rocco."

"Very true, Harry."

"Had the purser been dishonest he need not have given up the stone to Velasquez. The man could have declared he lost it."

"Well, there's no use guessing about the matter. Let us go and prepare for the work we have in hand for to-night. I am to disguise myself as a coachman and drive Mr. Fairfax to the rendezvous at Cathedral Heights with the package of fake money."

"And I, in command of half a dozen Secret Service detectives, have got to surround that section of Sedgwick avenue near the shanty opposite the Sailors' Home, and waylay the kidnapper when he comes to seize the bundle of what he will fondly believe to be the \$20,000 he demanded for Dottie's release."

The Bradys finally went down town.

They still had the horses hired of the White Plains blacksmith, but sent them back, as all the gypsies knew the animals by sight as the team Bendigo had driven for Rocco.

Zmaranda and her men having recognized them at Mount Vernon was the best evidence of this fact.

When night fell, Harry and half a dozen well armed men rode up to 155th street on the 9th avenue elevated road, and changed cars for the train to Morris Heights.

All were disguised.

They went singly and in pairs.

It was thus arranged so no suspicion would be directed toward so large a party traveling together.

Their plan was to scatter along the road and near the place to which Mr. Fairfax was going.

And this plan was carried out.

Meantime Old King Brady, disguised in a red wig and a coachman's livery, had secured his cab, and gone to the residence of the jeweler, on 5th avenue.

Mr. Fairfax entered the carriage and was driven away.

The distance to the rendezvous was great.

When the cab reached the top of the hill where the little shanty stood, near the Sailors' Home, and Mr. Fairfax alighted, he caught view of a sign tacked on the front of the building.

He read it.

The wording was as follows:

"Drive on to the corner of Kingsbridge road and Sedgwick avenue with the parcel, Mr. Fairfax."

"They mistrust us, Mr. Bra——"

"Hush! My name is James, sir."

"No one is listening."

"Don't be too sure of it."

"What does this sign mean?"

"It's part of their plan to avoid arrest, I presume."

"They are mighty cautious."

"I'll drive on."

"How about notifying your men?"

"They've already seen us reading the sign and will read it, too."

"Well, then, they'll follow us, I presume?"

"Yes. My partner will understand."

The jeweler entered the cab and Old King Brady slowly drove on.

He glanced back and saw the shadowy figure of a man steal from the bushes beside the road and approach the house.

Convinced that it was his pupil, he muttered:

"Harry will be after us with his men in a few moments."

The road was lonely and deserted.

Far below the railroad tracks skirted the Harlem river shore, and the dark expanse of water was dotted here and there with the twinkling lights on boats and houses.

When the carriage had gained a point not far from the rendezvous a man suddenly sprang from the bushes by the roadside, rushed out at the horse's head and grasped the bridle.

He was a burly fellow in a long cloak and slouch hat. A pistol was in his hand and he aimed it at Old King Brady and cried in deep, muffled tones:

"Halt!"

"Howley mackerel!" gasped Old King Brady, reining in.

"Drop those reins!"

"Niver!"

"Do you want me to kill you?"

"Sure, me horse will run away if I lave go."

"No, it won't! Obey me, or you are a dead man."

Old King Brady recognized the man by his voice to be Rocco Zingari, and to appease him he let go the reins.

"There!" he exclaimed, "Begob, you're responsible now me bucko."

"Get down from that seat!" cried the gypsy.

"Wid agility."

And down sprang the detective.

When he was on the ground, Rocco demanded:

"Isn't this George Fairfax's carriage?"

"It is that."

"And is he inside?"

"Yis."

"Open the door and call him out."

"Faith it's murder there'll be—"

"Never mind the result. Do as I tell you!"

The detective opened the carriage door.

"Mr. Fairfax," said he, "there's ther loikes av a black-muzzled spalpeen out here with a gun in his fist who wants ter see yer."

"Indeed, James; who is he?"

"Divil a bit do I know."

Mr. Fairfax alighted, and saw the man.

Rocco wasted no time; he was in a hurry.

"Have you got that \$20,000?" he demanded in gruff tones.

"I have," replied the jeweler. "Are you the man?"

"I am Rocco Zingari."

"Where is my child?"

"She will be returned to you when I am paid the ransom."

"Is she well?"

"Of course."

"You are taking great chances to attack and hold us up single-handed."

"Oh, I'm not alone," carelessly answered Rocco. "Look!"

He pointed at the bushes and whistled.

Instantly half a dozen gypsies glided out into the road and he shouted something to them in the Romany tongue and they paused.

Old King Brady was an interested spectator.

He saw they could not cope with that gang unaided and win a fight.

"Faith, they're too manny for us!" he exclaimed.

"You'd better not fight," replied Rocco in threatening tones. "We are prepared to die, if necessary, to carry our point. Besides, if anything happens to us your child will perish."

Mr. Fairfax looked startled.

"You surely would not harm the poor little thing?" he gasped.

"Wouldn't we, though! You don't know us. If I don't return in an hour to the party who has her, you'll get her corpse by express to-morrow."

The jeweler groaned.

He realized that he was at this villain's mercy.

"Have you got the money?" growled Rocco.

Mr. Fairfax hesitated about answering, as he feared they would murder his child when they discovered the deception he had practiced on them.

Old King Brady was quick to see what ailed him and he cried:

"Av coorse we have the dough. Give it to ther vilyun, Mr. Fairfax."

Within an hour after we have the money your child will be safely returned to you," eagerly said the gypsy king.

"Very well," exclaimed the jeweler, desperately. "There's the money."

He handed over the decoy parcel and Rocco said grimly:

"You are sensible. Drive back home. You've got to trust me to some extent, you know. But you'll find I haven't deceived you."

And he joined his friends and they vanished in the bushes.

CHAPTER XI.

EXPOSURE OF THE FRAUD.

"Mr. Fairfax."

"Well, Mr. Brady."

"You drive the horse home."

"And you?"

"I'm going to follow them."

"Very well."

The cab had gone down the hill and gypsies lurking in the bushes had evidently been watching it. But the moment they were beyond range of the villain's vision Old King Brady reined in and alighted.

After the foregoing dialogue the jeweler took charge of the horse.

Just then Harry glided from among some of the trees and joined them.

"We followed you," he began, but his partner interrupted with:

"Never mind explanations. We must shadow them."

"How about our men?"

"Let them follow us."

"I'll tell them."

The boy darted away.

In two minutes he was back, muttering:

"Go ahead. It's all right."

"Come down on the side of the hill. The trees will hide our movements."

Away they glided and Mr. Fairfax drove off.

The jeweler's brain was in a whirl.

He did not know what his child's fate would be, and the uncertainty rendered him very nervous.

The Bradys quickly reached a point below the spot where the gypsies had been lurking and crept up the hill.

Nothing was seen of the miscreants.

But they had left a clear trail which the detectives had not the slightest difficulty in following.

The weeds and bushes were broken and bent by being tramped down.

"We can easily follow them here," whispered Harry.

"Look out you don't run upon them unexpectedly."

They pressed on for some distance.

Behind them the six Secret Service men were closely following, and they finally reached a place where the trail turned down toward the railroad tracks and followed it to the low ground.

When they reached the roadbed, they found a number of freight cars standing at a siding, and Harry glided over to the river bank to get a view between the cars and the main track.

He hissed to Old King Brady and beckoned.

When they met, the boy whispered, as he pointed ahead:

"There they are."

He pointed to a spot between one of the cars and the river.

Old King Brady saw the gang.

They were gathered in a group around Rocco.

Rushing forward, on the other side of the car, the Bradys arrived opposite where the gypsies were standing and crouched down.

By looking under the car they could see the gypsies' legs. Hearing Rocco speaking, they listened.

"So far all has worked well," the rascal was saying.

"You've got the money in that parcel then, have you?"

asked one of the gang whom the detectives recognized as Bendigo by his voice.

"Oh, yes. I knew he'd be so scared about his daughter's welfare that he would not hesitate to comply with my demands."

"And we get our share?"

"Part of it. But Posey and I must each have a third, as we did most of the hard work," answered Rocco.

"That suits us. Where is the girl?"

"Across the river."

"With the child?"

"Yes."

"Going to give her up now?"

"Of course. We don't want the brat."

"How are you going to reach her?"

"I'll cross in a boat I've got waiting up the shore."

"Say, Rocco, where have you got the kid located?"

"That's my business!" growled the gypsy in surly tones.

His reply disappointed the Bradys.

They expected to hear him disclose the child's whereabouts.

Now they knew they could only find her by following Rocco, for they did not intend to trust to his assertion that he would return her.

Finally Bendigo said:

"You'd better divide the money now."

"Can't you wait?" snapped Rocco.

"We can, but don't want to."

"Why, I'm not going to steal it."

"A bird in hand is worth two in the bush, eh boys?"

"Ay!" cried several of the men. "Divide now, Rocco."

"You don't trust me!" angrily exclaimed the gypsy.

"Oh, yes we do," assured Bendigo blandly, "but you know how a man's palm will itch to get hold of a large sum of money due him."

"Very well," grumbled the gypsy. "You can have it."

"Here's a knife to cut the string."

The detectives heard them open the parcel and smiled grimly at each other, for they knew what a disclosure was coming.

Suddenly Rocco yelled furiously:

"By the demon of darkness, we've been duped!"

"Eh?" gasped Bendigo in startled tones.

"It's a parcel of blank paper with a one dollar bill on top."

"Thunder!"

"Fairfax has fooled us!"

The gang broke into a bitter tirade of abuse and profanity against the jeweler for a few moments, as they were terribly disappointed.

Finally Rocco hissed in savage tones:

"What did he expect to gain by this deception?"

"Probably thought you'd give the child on the spot for the money."

"Well, he got left. We've got her yet."

"Yes, and we'll keep her till we're paid."

"I'll make that man sweat for this trick."

"By all means. He has got to pay up."
 "If he don't, and mighty soon, he'll regret it."
 "What's to be done next, Rocco?"
 "Send him a warning letter, of course."
 "See that it goes to-night."
 "I shall."

"Let him understand that you won't put up with any more of his nonsense," advised Bendigo in angry tones.

"Depend upon me to lay down the law to him properly."

They discussed the matter awhile.

Finally Rocco said to his followers:

"You fellows get back to Zmaranda's camp and there await my further orders. I must go over the river now, to Posey."

"How soon shall we hear from you?"

"Perhaps to-morrow."

"Very well."

"Follow the railroad or ride back."

The men agreed and they parted.

"Harry," whispered Old King Brady, rapidly, "I am going to try to follow him. In the meantime you had better get your men together and tackle that bunch. After you capture them you may find me somewhere across the stream."

"All right," assented the boy, as he moved away, and he soon vanished behind the end of the cars and Old King Brady crept after the gypsies. He saw them leave Rocco up the road a short distance and then go on. The gypsy king had a skiff handy, and embarking, he rowed away. For a few moments Old King Brady did not know exactly what to do, but he suddenly remembered where there was a boat-builder's shop. It was quite a distance away and he dared not pass the gypsies to hasten ahead, for fear they would stop him.

While he was in this quandary, Harry and his companions came running along the track, and Old King Brady started at a rush to lead the impression that they were pursuing him.

The gypsies heard them coming.

Alarmed for a moment, they dashed into the bushes.

Old King Brady sped by them, and when Harry and his men came up, they suddenly paused and opened fire on the gypsies with their pistols. Seeing that they were being attacked the rascals drew their own weapons and fired back a volley at the officers.

In a moment more a fierce fight was going on.

Old King Brady did not wait to see the result of the battle.

He raced on, and, reaching the place he was searching for, he ran out on a little wooden pier and scanned the water below.

To his joy he saw a skiff tied to the piles.

Opening a long oar-box on the pier, he took out a pair of sculls and climbed down into the waiting boat.

In a minute more he had the painter untied and was rowing swiftly out upon the dark, glassy river.

He had to go down stream with the tide. When half the

distance across was covered he suddenly caught sight of the boat in which Rocco sat rowing.

At the same moment the gypsy caught view of him.

CHAPTER XII.

CAUGHT IN THE QUARRY.

Old King Brady let his boat drift with the tide, and rising to his feet, he leveled his pistol at the gypsy, and shouted, sternly:

"Rocco, stop where you are, or I'll shoot you!"

"Fire, but I won't pause!" defiantly answered the villain.

"Then take the consequence."

And his pistol was discharged.

He was a dead shot.

The ball struck Rocco's neck, inflicting a slight wound.

It frightened the burly rascal and he gave a cry of pain and alarm.

"You've hit me!"

"Are you going to stop rowing?"

"No!"

Bang! went the second shot.

It grazed Rocco's skull and knocked off his hat.

"Oh! I'm a dead man!" he gasped, rowing furiously.

"The next one will pierce your brain!" cried the detective.

"Have mercy, Brady!"

"Not a bit. You are a marked man."

The gypsy had kept on rowing, and now stealthily produced his own revolver. He suddenly fired at the detective.

The bullet passed Old King Brady's head.

He took deliberate aim and pulled the trigger, but to his disgust the pistol failed to discharge and he saw that his cartridges were used up. Seeming to realize what happened, the gypsy now sprang to his feet. The detective's body was clearly outlined.

It made a good target.

Rocco fired three shots in rapid succession.

Luckily for Old King Brady the Romany man was so nervous and excited that he failed to hit his mark.

The detective did not budge.

His cool indifference to danger was marvelous, for he scarcely paid any heed to the rain of bullets flying around him, and went on loading his pistol with cartridges.

Rocco became alarmed.

Seizing his oars he rowed away furiously for the shore, and Old King Brady was compelled to stop and chase him.

He feared if the man got too far in advance he would lose him.

An exciting race over the gloomy river ensued.

The gypsy rowed with all his strength and, although the detective exerted himself to the utmost, he failed to gain an inch.

"He will land ahead of me!" he muttered.

The two skiffs shot through the water at a terrific pace, and in ten minutes more Rocco's boat touched the shore.

He leaped out and ran away.
Old King Brady kept on rowing.
He glanced ahead over his shoulder and watched the fugitive. Rocco rushed along the shore and plunged among some rocks near an excavation in the hill.

There was a big stone crusher standing nearby and a number of deserted buildings, once used by the quarrymen:

He saw the gypsy heading toward them.
It brought a grim smile to Old King Brady's face.
"He must have Posey and the child hidden there," he muttered.

Just as Rocco disappeared the detective's boat was beached. He ran toward the quarry.

As he passed along behind the crusher he suddenly caught a view of a dim light gleaming in the shanty. It came from a doorway through which the gypsy was just then passing into the hut.

"There's where they've got the child concealed," muttered Old King Brady.

Swiftly crossing the intervening space, he saw the light go out and as he reached the little building he heard Posey's voice inside saying:

"There—the light is out."

"Don't speak loud!" warned Rocco.

"Who is chasing you?"

"Old King Brady, disguised as a coachman. I recognized his voice."

"Do you suppose he saw you come here?"

"No. But he must have landed."

"Did you get Fairfax's money?"

"No. He played a game on us."

"That's too bad."

"Where's the child?"

"Asleep in the other room."

"Guard her. She may awaken, yell and betray us."

"You keep watch at the window."

"Go ahead, and get the horse ready. We can't remain here."

Old King Brady crept over to the door, for there was no time to lose if he wished to rescue the child from these people.

Just as he reached the door it flew open.

Rocco stood on the threshold.

The old detective recoiled, but before he had a chance to do anything Rocco gave a panther-like spring, clutched him by the throat and bore him over on the ground.

Old King Brady fell heavily.

His enemy was on top.

Striking his head on the ground he was stunned.

A cry of savage exultation escaped Rocco when he saw the condition the old detective was in.

He glared at him a moment and cried:

"Senseless! He's at my mercy now!"

He bound Old King Brady's arms behind his back with his neckerchief, and then yelled to Posey:

"Come here—quick!"

"What's the matter?" replied the gypsy girl.

"I've got the detective!"

"Good gracious!"

Posey came rushing up to him with a scared look on her face, and glancing down at the detective, she asked:

"How did you subdue him?"

"Caught him at the door."

"You deserve credit for this capture."

"It was an easy job. He landed on his head on the ground."

"What's to be done with him, Rocco?"

The gypsy pondered a few moments.

He greatly feared the old detective and the dark thoughts flitting through his mind found expression when he said:

"Kill him."

"No! No!"

"We must, for our own safety."

"Just tie him up till we get away."

"Humbug! He would soon escape and capture us."

"I don't believe it."

"We'd get ten years in jail if he does."

The girl shuddered and gasped:

"I wish I hadn't engaged in this dangerous business."

"Don't weaken, Posey; it's too late."

"I suppose so," sighed the girl.

"Now, see here. If we put this man out of the way we will have nothing more to fear from him in future. If we permit him to live he will injure us."

"It's a trying position to be placed in," murmured the girl.

"Are you afraid to defend yourself?"

"No. But I don't fancy killing people."

"Well, you go and get the carriage ready so we can escape from here with the child. Brady's partner and friends are across the river fighting my men. There's no telling at what moment they may be over here to attack us."

"You alarm me, Rocco."

"Keep your nerve; you'll need it."

"Are you sure they are coming over here?"

"No. But it's very likely."

"What will you do while I'm gone?"

"Attend to Brady's case."

The girl was silent.

She read his deadly intent in the tones of his voice.

Saying no more, she finally walked away and left the gypsy alone with his victim.

Rocco glanced around.

His eyes fell on the stone crusher and he muttered:

"I'll put him in that machine and let the weight come down on his head. It will give his death the appearance of accident and no one will think of accusing me."

He seized Old King Brady and dragged him over to the crusher.

Lifting his victim up, he laid him on the bed-plate.

High up in the scaffold hung an iron trip-hammer weighing two tons, suspended over the detective's body.

Rocco drew his knife to cut the rope holding the weight up.

Once that rope was severed the weight would descend at lightning speed, and land on the detective's head.

The gypsy raised his knife and glanced about to see if any one saw him.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTURING SIX.

Ignorant of the fact that Old King Brady was running into such danger at the quarry across the river, Harry and his six detectives had opened fire on Rocco's gang.

The gypsies took to the bushes beside the railroad track and returned the Secret Service men's pistol shots.

As all his men were exposed, Harry cried in reckless tones:

"Charge on them!"

"Lead the way, Harry!" replied one of the men.

Clutching his pistol in his hand, the intrepid boy plunged into the bushes, followed by his friends.

In a moment more they met the gypsies.

Every man singled out an opponent.

Then a fierce hand to hand conflict ensued.

When the firing was going on, several men on both sides were wounded by the shots.

But they were too excited to pay any heed to their injuries and they fought like tigers.

The gypsies were desperate.

They realized the danger of capture.

On the other hand the officers were resolved to arrest these villains at any hazard and they fought furiously.

Every time they got the chance they shot at each other.

Groans and yells resounded on all sides.

The man Harry attacked started to run away.

"Stand!" the boy shouted.

The villain turned to shoot him.

Up went Harry's pistol at the same moment.

Both weapons were discharged at the same instant, but while the gypsy's bullet missed, the young detective's struck and the man fell groaning to the ground.

"Don't let one of them escape!" shouted the boy.

"Some are going up the hill!" panted a detective.

"Follow and capture them!"

Two men were scaling the elevation.

Up rushed two of the officers in hot pursuit.

Before the villains reached the crest the detectives overtook them.

They clinched.

There was a momentary struggle.

Then they fell.

Down the steep hill they came tumbling, rolling over and over, locked in a tight embrace, and sending up a cloud of dust and dirt.

Three more of the gang were fighting the other officers.

While two couples were struggling, the third were having an appalling conflict, the gypsy, armed with a dagger and the detective wielding a revolver, the cartridges of which were all used up.

Just as Harry glanced at them, the gypsy clutched the man by the throat with one hand and raised the dagger to stab him.

In another moment the detective would have been killed. Harry observed his danger.

Raising his pistol, he aimed at the upraised knife-hand. Bang!

The dagger flew from the gypsy's hand.

A yell of pain escaped the swarthy wretch.

A tiny streak of blood trickled from his wrist where the ball penetrated.

His hand fell useless at his side.

The detective gave him a punch in the face that knocked him over, and falling on the rascal handcuffed him.

"Good shot, Harry!" he cried.

"I seldom miss," laughed the boy, quietly.

Then he ran to help the others.

Unable to withstand the terrific onslaught of the officers all the gypsies were overpowered and secured.

Six men were made prisoners.

When the half exhausted officers recovered their strength and breath, they examined their wounds, and found they were slight.

The gypsies were not so fortunate.

Some of them were badly cut by the bullets.

Moreover, the exertions to which they had gone told on them, and as Harry reviewed the gang he saw they were in bad shape.

Addressing Bendigo, he said:

"You might have avoided all this trouble by surrendering in the beginning, and no one would have been hurt."

"We had to fight," growled the gypsy.

"Not necessarily."

"You would have killed us if we hadn't."

"Why should we?"

"Out of revenge for what we did to you and your partner."

"You are mistaken. We bear you no grudge."

"Then you must be very peculiar people."

"We ain't gypsies," significantly answered Harry.

The man laughed grimly.

"That accounts for it," said he.

"Now, see here, we want to know where Rocco has gone."

"Over the river in a skiff."

"Where to?"

"I can't tell, as I don't know."

"Are you speaking the truth?"

"I'd swear to it."

His earnest manner convinced Harry.

The boy recalled to mind that Rocco had refused to go to Bendigo where he had the child, Dottie, hidden.

"I believe you, Bendigo," he said at length.

"Glad of that. We really didn't have much to do with the abduction."

"Were only Rocco and Posey concerned in it?"

"They put up the whole job with a fellow named Viquez."

"We know all about that part of it."

"Then you must know how little we fellows had to do with the case."

"You helped him all you could."

"I don't deny that. Remember, he was our chief, and we had to."

"Don't you know who killed Velasquez?"

"No, we don't," emphatically replied Bendigo.

"Sure?"

"Want me to take an oath to it?"

"Oh, I guess your word is as good as your oath."

"So it is, Brady."

"Is Zmaranda's camp still in the same place?"

"Yes. She's up in Mount Vernon."

"Well, we've got to take you fellows back to New York."

"Can't be helped, I suppose."

Harry called his men together.

Pointing at the prisoners, he remarked:

"Each of you take a man. Hold your pistols in readiness, and if any of them attempt to escape, shoot them down at once. Take them to the city and lock them up. I am going to go after Old King Brady."

The detectives assented.

It made the gypsies uneasy, though.

"Don't worry, boss," said Bendigo, earnestly. "We ain't going to attempt to escape. We don't wish to get shot."

"You hold your fate in your own hands," replied Harry.

He formed them in line, a detective ranged up to each man, and in this order they marched down the railroad track.

Upon reaching Morris Heights, they finally boarded a train and reaching One Hundred and Fifty-fifth street, changed to the elevated road.

In this manner they rode downtown and locked the prisoners up. Young King Brady remained behind.

When his friends were gone, he went searching for a boat, and finally secured one, boarded it, and rowed out on the river.

He did not know where to look for Old King Brady, but finally concluded to go straight across the stream.

Accordingly he rowed for the opposite shore.

When he neared it, he caught a view of a light.

A moment after he saw it, the light was suddenly extinguished.

The boy did not know it, but that light came from the shanty in the quarry in which Posey had the child concealed.

As it was the only thing Harry saw to attract him, he made up his mind to go toward it.

This was done, and he landed not a great while after his partner did.

He soon observed the character of the place.

When he saw the scaffold of the big crusher rising dim and skeleton-like in the air, it aroused his curiosity.

"I wonder what that thing is?" he muttered.

He strode toward the queer, big object.

When he arrived near enough to it, he observed Old King Brady's peril, and like a flash drew his revolver.

The boy saw that if that rope were cut by the gypsy the life would be crushed out of Old King Brady in an instant.

The boy was horrified.

He took deliberate aim with his pistol at Rocco.

Then he fired, and eagerly watched the effect of his shot. He heard the villain cry out; saw him stagger back and drop his knife, then the man fell.

"I've hit him!" gasped the boy.

He rushed forward to drag his old partner out of danger.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOLLOWED TO ALBANY.

"Old King Brady! Old King Brady!"

"Harry, is that you?"

"Yes, yes! Wake up, what's the matter with you?"

And the boy dragged his old friend from the crusher to the ground and shook, and rubbed, and pounded him all over to arouse him from the half stupor he was still in.

Old King Brady revived under this rough treatment, and everything came back to his foggy mind, and he sat up, stared blankly around, and finally asked in faint tones:

"What has happened?"

"You've been senseless."

"Ah, yes, I fell and hurt my head."

"Did you know Rocco was going to kill you?"

"No. Was he?"

"Yes. Had you in this crusher."

"Confound him!"

"If I hadn't arrived just in time, and shot him just as he was about to cut the rope, you would have been killed."

"By Jove, was it as bad as that?"

"You can imagine how nervous it made me."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. Lying somewhere over there on the ground, where he fell when I put a ball in his hide."

"Better secure him, Harry."

"Did you find the child?"

"It was in yonder shanty in care of Posey."

"Here, I'll release you of your bonds."

"Do—I'm badly cramped."

Harry took the neckerchief from his wrists, and then ran over to the place where he had seen Rocco fall.

The boy searched around over quite a large area, but he failed to see any sign of the gypsy king.

Instead, he heard the pounding of horses' hoofs and the rumble of carriage wheels off among the trees.

These sounds alarmed him, when taken in conjunction with the mysterious disappearance of the gypsy.

"What can it mean?" he muttered.

Just then Old King Brady got up and joined him.

"Have you got the wretch?" he asked.

"No," replied Harry, shaking his head. "He's gone."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"That is strange."

"Very. He fell right here."

"Badly wounded?"

"That's a mystery. But I say, had he a carriage?"

"Yes."

"Thunder!"

"What's the trouble now?"

"I heard the vehicle going."

"Then they've escaped."

"So I fear."

"That's bad. Come up on this hill."

They hurried up on an elevation from the top of which they caught a good view of the surrounding land in all directions.

Sweeping their gaze around, they caught sight of a horse and open buggy going away along the course of the river at a rapid pace.

Three people occupied the equipage, whom they had no difficulty in recognizing.

They were Rocco, Posey and the abducted girl, Dottie Fairfax.

As soon as the detectives saw them, they realized that the very ones they were after were slipping out of their reach.

"There they go!" Old King Brady exclaimed, in disgust.

"And we'll never catch them now," replied Harry.

"That's hard luck!"

"Can you run?"

"No, I'm too weak."

"In that case we may as well give up all hope of getting our hands on them to-night," said Harry.

"We can follow them in the row boat."

"True, but they will keep running away from us."

"In that case we must trail them, and when I get over the effect of my fall, we shall stick to their heels till we get them."

"Come on into the boat."

They embarked, and Harry pulled up stream.

"Well, they will keep going straight ahead, and I've got an idea that they will take to the cars now that they are aware we are after them."

"If they abandon their carriage, it will be all the easier for us to keep on their trail," said Old King Brady.

"Did I tell you we captured Bendigo and his crowd?"

"No; but I'm glad to hear it."

"We can't learn anything of value from them."

"I presumed not, as the dialogue we overheard between him and Rocco seemed to indicate that the gypsy king was keeping the abduction all in his own hands."

"He wants to get all the reward for himself," laughed Harry. His pals wanted their share, you know."

"And they all got left."

"For the time being."

"I suppose they'll write again to the jeweler."

"Of course; but next time Rocco is apt to be more careful."

Speaking thus, they kept on to Spuyten Duyvil, and here they found the gypsy's horse and carriage—deserted.

At the next railroad station they discovered that a party answering the description of the gypsies and the stolen child had boarded a train after purchasing tickets for Albany.

Owing to the lateness of the hour, another train would not be along for two hours, and the detectives had to wait.

There was no help for it, however.

So they settled down in the station, and talked over their plans until the cars came along.

Old King Brady still wore the coachman's livery, but as he had his own costume on underneath, and carried his felt hat rolled up in his pocket, he abandoned the disguise.

They finally boarded the train.

Composing themselves, they caught some sleep before the cars pulled into the capital, some hours later.

Their first care was to make diligent inquiry for Rocco Posey and the child, and a station agent assured them that such a party had alighted from the preceding train, and left in a cab.

Next they had to hunt for the cabman who carried them off.

There were so many about the depot it was a very hard matter to find the one they wanted.

Indeed, it was nearly midday before they found a man who claimed to have carried the abductors.

He remembered having taken them to a cheap hotel, and readily consented to carry the detectives there.

Getting into the cab, the detectives were driven away to a poor section of the city in the suburbs.

The vehicle finally paused before a dingy-looking saloon not far from the railroad tracks, and when the Bradys alighted, the driver said:

"Here's the place I brought them to."

"Wait here for us," replied Old King Brady.

They passed into the private entrance and met a clerk, who asked:

"Want rooms, gents?"

"We've called to see some friends," replied Harry.

"Stopping here?"

"Yes."

"What name?"

"Zingari."

"Oh, the gypsy man, woman and kid?"

"Yes. Are they here?"

"Why, yes. They've got a friend here."

"A friend? Who is it?"

"An old gypsy fortune teller in No. 10, called Madam _____."

"Do you know if they are with her now?"

"They've got rooms on each side of hers, and were with her a good deal."

"We'll go up and see."

"Shall I send up and find out for you?"

"Oh, no thank you. It's a joke. We want to take them by surprise."

"I see," grinned the clerk. "Go ahead up."

"Thank you," said Harry politely.

And they hastened upstairs, and soon found the fortune teller's door.

It was easy to distinguish it from the rest, as her name was on a sign hung there in which a hand was drawn, under which was the solitary word, "Palmist."

Pushing open the door, the Bradys entered the room.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE PALMIST'S DEN.

The Bradys found themselves in a strange, Oriental apartment, containing all sorts of screens, tapestries, rugs and plants.

Upon the walls were charts of heads, hands and faces, a human skull grinned down at the detectives from the top of a shelf, and a huge black cat came purring and rubbing itself against their legs.

The Bradys saw an open door which communicated with an adjoining room, from which there emanated the sound of voices.

Pausing, they listened, and heard a voice say:

"Some one coming, Madam."

"Ay," croaked a hoarse feminine voice, "some one to consult the oracle."

"Better get thy palm crossed with silver, Madam."

"I'll cast a horoscope in accordance with the size of the fee."

"May it suit thy desire," said the same young voice, and the detectives now recognized the tones as those of Posey.

Old King Brady nudged the boy.

"Follow me!" he whispered, gliding into the room.

Just then an old woman hobbled in from the next room, clad in a curiously embroidered red dress, a high, conical cap on her head, and her yellowish-gray hair falling disheveled around her wrinkled face.

She carried a cane and was bent with age, her parrot-like nose almost touched her long, pointed chin, from her having no teeth, and her keen little eyes were sunk deeply in her withered head.

She looked like what a witch was supposed to be.

The detectives paused and eyed her.

"Madam?" asked Old King Brady softly.

"Ay, that's my name," muttered the old fortune teller, nodding her head repeatedly, "and you—you've come to consult me on a matter of business. You are from a distance, and bent upon business I don't like. I can see it in space, it's all before me."

She paused and stretched out her claw-like hand.

A dark frown gathered on her brow, and her eyes seemed to pierce them through and through for an instant.

Then she suddenly pointed at the door with her cane, and trembling as if from suppressed excitement, she added in shrill tones:

"Go—clear out of here. I do not want you. I can feel the oppression that enemies bring."

"Madam——" began the astonished old detective, but she interrupted:

"No—no, don't find objections. You are a pair of vipers come to sting me. I can see it, I tell you. There's a bad air about you, and the old gypsy knows. You need not speak to me."

Just then her excited voice caused Posey to peer in.

She saw the Bradys, and they saw her.

A low, stifled cry escaped her:

"The Bradys!" she gasped, turning pale.

Further concealment being useless, the detectives sprang forward, and Old King Brady shouted:

"Posey, we want you!"

"You'll never get me!" she screamed.

Retreating into her room, she slammed the door shut.

The old fortune teller struck at them with her cane, and although they felt the blows, she was so old and feeble they did not hurt.

"Back with you!" she shrieked. "I knew it! I knew you were a pair of traitors when I first saw you!"

"Stand aside!" commanded Old King Brady, sternly.

"No—no——"

"Come, Harry!"

Thrusting her gently aside, the old detective rushed at the door of Posey's room and turned the knob.

"Locked!" he muttered.

"Try to force it," Harry suggested.

"Lend me your aid."

"Now—together!"

They dashed at the door and hit it violently with their shoulders, the lock snapped, and they plunged into the room.

But they were a minute too late.

The bird had flown.

A hasty search revealed this disagreeable fact.

"Gave us the slip!" said Harry.

"Try the other room, then," his partner answered. "Rocco may be in there."

They rushed toward the other door, but the old fortune teller had pushed a heavy table before it to hinder them.

She planted herself against it and cried:

"You can't go through here!"

"Out of the way!" roared Old King Brady.

"Not a step!" she retorted defiantly.

"We will be obliged to remove you, then!"

And so saying Old King Brady picked her up bodily, ran to a closet, sat her inside, and banged the door shut.

The moment she was removed Harry pulled the table away.

"All ready!" he laughed.

They launched themselves at the door.

A fearful shock followed, and the lock broke.

Into the room they rushed, and glanced around.

"Empty!" gasped Harry. "Perhaps she went out into the hall."

"There's a window wide open."

"Yes, and a fire-escape."

"Let me see."

Darting over to the window, they peered out.

They were just in time to see Posey, with little Dottie Fairfax in her arms, darting around an angle of the house, closely followed by Rocco, who was looking back over his shoulder.

The gypsy saw the detectives' heads thrust out the window.

They saw him shake his fist up at them, and heard him give vent to a wild, reckless laugh of derision.

In an instant more he vanished.

"Come, after them, Harry!"

"Run down the stairs. We may head them off in the street."

Out of the room they ran, just as the old woman burst from the closet in a rage and hobbled toward them waving her cane.

Down the stairs they fled, and they passed out onto the sidewalk; but here another bitter disappointment met them.

The kidnapers had offered the Bradys' cabman a bribe, sprang into the carriage, and were driven away at a terrific rate.

"Well," gasped the old detective, pointing after the receding vehicle, "they've got the best of us again, Harry!"

Young King Brady was wild.

It was mortifying to see their carriage used this way.

"I'd like to punch that cabman's head!" he cried, angrily.

"Run after them. We may pick up a carriage."

"They're heading for the railroad depot."

"Yes, and there's a train ready to depart."

"If it's a possible thing they'll catch it, too."

"No doubt of that."

Away they dashed in hot pursuit of the flying vehicle.

It had a good start, however, and no matter how fast they ran, it kept in the lead.

It was going straight for the depot.

On ran the Bradys at the top of their speed.

The carriage dashed up to the depot, and the occupants alighted. The pursuers saw Rocco hand the driver a bill, and then, with Posey and the child, board the train.

As the cars had already started, and the locomotive was fast gathering headway, the detectives saw they could not catch the train.

"It's useless!" groaned Harry.

"Don't give up yet."

"What's the use; we can't catch it?"

"I'm not so sure about that."

"What—can't you see it's running right away from us?"

"That makes no difference."

"You've got some other idea in view."

"So I have. See that locomotive on the siding?"

"Yes."

"We can chase them with that."

"Impossible!"

"Hold on! See that old man at the depot?"

"The one with white whiskers?"

"Exactly."

"What about him?"

"He's a director of this road, and I know him."

"I see—I see your plan."

"The man he is talking to is the general superintendent. I am acquainted with him, too. I'm going to lay the whole matter before the pair and enlist their sympathy. I think I can then induce them to loan us that locomotive to chase and catch those child-stealers."

"Try them, by all means!"

They soon reached the station.

By that time the departing train was half a mile away.

Old King Brady, panting for breath, now approached the two men he had referred to.

CHAPTER XVI.

FOUND AT LAST.

"Ah, Old King Brady! What in the world are you doing away up here in this part of the State?" cried the railroad director, as he warmly shook hands with the old detective.

"We are after the kidnapers of the Fairfax child."

"I read in the papers that you were engaged on that case and it is a case which has aroused public sentiment to a high degree."

"Are you a father, sir?"

"I am, and dearly love my children."

"Then you sympathize with poor Mr. Fairfax?"

"Most heartily."

"Would you aid him to recover his child, if you could?"

"Willingly!"

"I'll put you to the test."

"How so?"

"Do you see the train which just departed?"

"I do."

"The two gypsies who kidnaped baby Fairfax are on it."

"What?" gasped the astonished man.

"It's a fact. We just chased them aboard the train with the child."

"Was that couple who last got aboard with a sleeping child the pair?"

"They were."

"My goodness! If we had only known we might have stopped them."

"Just so. It's too late to do so now, of course."

"Oh, what a pity!"

"There's one chance to capture them yet."

"Name it!"

"To pursue the train in yonder locomotive."

"Ah, I see! You want our consent?"

"Exactly."

"You have it. Go, and good luck attend you!"

"I'll instruct the engineer!" said the superintendent.

Both realized that there was no time to be wasted, and the flying train was momentarily widening the breach between them.

Accompanied by the Bradys, the superintendent ran over to the locomotive, while the director hastened to the railroad telegraph office to instruct the operator to keep the track clear till the "wild-cat" locomotive passed along.

Reaching the locomotive caboose, the superintendent cried to the engineer and fireman, who sat inside:

"Chase that train with these two men, and don't come back until you overtake it, Bill!"

"Very good, sir."

"Take a siding at the nearest station to the place where you overhauled the train, and notify us by telegraph. You will then receive your instructions from me how to act."

"That all?"

"Yes. Go!"

The Bradys climbed aboard.

As the engineer had steam up, he soon sent his engine rolling over the rails at a fast-increasing speed.

Once they were flying over the glistening rails at a rate which promised to bring the locomotive up to the train, the Bradys breathed easier, and Harry remarked in pleased tones:

"It will be mighty queer if we don't run them down now."

"We are in luck!" Old King Brady chuckled.

"Was that a New York train?" queried Harry of the engineer.

"Yes," assented Bill. "What's the cause of the race?"

Harry told him, and when he finished both the engineer and fireman were very much astonished.

"So you two are the Bradys, eh?" the former inquired.

"We are. Have you heard of the case before?" asked Harry.

"Everybody in the country knows about it. We came up from New York on our last run this morning, and have the papers."

"I suppose they are full of the case."

"So they are; and I see that both Mr. Fairfax and the chief of police have each offered a reward of \$25,000 apiece for the arrest and conviction of the rascals who committed that dreadful crime."

"Indeed, that's our first knowledge of it."

"If you collar the villains your fortune is made."

"Yes, but that's no incentive to us. We are simply doing our duty. What spurs us on to do our utmost is our knowledge of the awful suffering of the parents of that little child. It will be a source of intense pleasure to us to put little Dottie Fairfax safely in the arms of her parents again."

"Well, sir, you can depend we'll do all that lies in our power to help you to do it," warmly said the good-hearted engineer.

The fireman shoveled more coal into the roaring furnace.

Steam was fairly hissing at the safety valve, and they were kept busy blowing the whistle as they flew along, every revolution of the wheels bringing them nearer to the fugitives they were so anxious to overtake.

Half an hour of anxious waiting and watching slipped by.

Mile after mile was covered at a furious rate of speed.

Harry stood silently at a forward window.

Suddenly he caught a view of a moving object in the distance.

He started and peered ahead harder.

Then he cried:

"There it is, at last!"

All the others eagerly scanned the tiny speck, which was slowly but surely growing larger every moment.

Soon they made it out distinctly as a moving train.

"He's right!" exclaimed the engineer. "That's the train."

"We're gaining fast, too!" remarked the fireman.

"Do you know what her speed is?" Old King Brady asked.

"About forty-five miles an hour," replied the engineer.

"And us?"

"Ten miles better."

"In a short time, then, we'll reach her."

"Oh, yes. She has got to stop soon, too."

"I hope our enemies won't learn that we are pursuing them, as they might alight and get away across the country," said Harry.

"Can't answer for that," said the engineer. "The crew of that train are pretty sure to see us bearing down upon them, and will wonder why we are doing it. If the passengers get wind of the fact, the news is pretty sure to spread and reach the ears of the very ones you don't wish to know it. Then they'll suspect trouble."

"Can't you overhaul them before they make their first stop?" anxiously demanded the old detective.

"It's doubtful, Mr. Brady, but I'll try to."

As they kept going on, the train ahead was getting plainer every moment, and they soon could see it distinctly.

The detectives could see how they were gaining then.

But they soon noted a disagreeable fact, too.

And that was that the pursuit was seen by the crew ahead.

Fearing to let the train reach the station in advance, Bill now put on every pound of steam his boiler would carry.

The locomotive seemed to spring ahead faster, and the intervening space began to swiftly narrow down.

In fifteen minutes more they were close up behind the train, and the engineer had to slacken speed.

The conductor now appeared on the rear platform and yelled:

"What are you chasing us for?"

"To put two passengers aboard, by the superintendent's order," the engineer shouted back. "Just pull up. I can't run too close."

"Very well. Drop behind, and look out, now."

He rang the bell, and the pursuing locomotive fell behind.

Soon after the train stopped, and the locomotive upon which the Bradys rode came to a sudden pause.

The detectives alighted, ran forward and boarded the coach ahead.

In a moment more the train went on.

Passing into the coach, they scanned the passengers, and their glances fell upon the two gypsies.

A stifled scream escaped Posey, who had the abducted child, and Rocco bounded to his feet and felt for his pistol.

Before he could draw it, Old King Brady had him covered, and cried:

"Hands up, Rocco! We've got you cold, my boy!"

Up went the gypsy's hands.

In a moment more Harry had him handcuffed.

Old King Brady strode over to Posey.

"You are my prisoner," he exclaimed.

"Don't hurt me!" she pleaded, in tones of alarm.

"We merely wish to handcuff you."

And as he spoke he secured her, and took the child in his arms.

Just then Dottie, who was clad in poor clothing, awakened.

She looked as if she had been weeping a great deal, and her first cry was:

"I want my mamma!"

"Don't worry, little one," said the kind old detective, as he kissed her and held her to his breast. "We've taken you from those naughty people, and very soon you will be back in your mamma's arms again."

She trusted him and cuddled up in his arms, while Harry planted Rocco in a seat beside the gypsy girl, and mounted guard over them.

And as the train sped on, the Bradys realized that the race was at an end.

CHAPTER XVII.

IDENTIFYING THE DAGGER.

It was nightfall when the train thundered into the Grand Central depot, and the Bradys alighted with their prisoners and the child.

Their first care was to lock up the abductors, and then they entered a cab with little Dottie, and drove up Fifth avenue.

Alighting at the Fairfax mansion, they rang for admittance, and a servant opened the door and let them in.

Upon seeing the child she gave a wild shriek, which brought Mr. and Mrs. Fairfax rushing from the parlor in alarm.

The moment they saw Dottie in Old King Brady's arms, they cried out for joy, and rushing forward the lady seized her child.

Grabbing her from Old King Brady's hands, the lady smothered her little one with kisses, and tears of joy and gratitude streamed from her eyes.

"My child! Oh, my darling—darling child!" she fairly screamed.

Even Mr. Fairfax was half delirious with happiness.

He embraced little Dottie, and leaving her to her mother again, he turned to the Bradys with tears in his eyes, and said:

"It is impossible for me to express my gratitude to you, gentlemen!"

"Don't say a word," interposed Old King Brady, gently. "The pleasure of seeing your transports of joy over the restoration of your baby to your arms more than repays us for the trouble we have had."

"I shall never forget this."

"Well, it's all right. You've got her back safe and well, and I'm glad to say we've not only captured her abductors, but we've got them in jail. They will get the punishment they so richly deserve now."

"I'll prosecute them bitterly!" declared Mr. Fairfax.

"An example should be made of them," said the old detective. "If you don't, it will only encourage other miscreants to repeat this crime, and break the hearts of other loving parents."

"Depend upon me, when the time comes, Mr. Brady."

Mrs. Fairfax now interrupted.

She thanked the gallant detectives over and over again for the immense service they had rendered her, and declared that there was nothing she could do for them to fully show her appreciation.

Deluged with their gratitude, the detectives were glad to escape from the house at last, and they proceeded straight to headquarters.

There they met their chief.

Giving him a concise account of all that transpired, Old King Brady finally said in conclusion:

"We have practically closed the abduction incident now but we don't seem to have made any headway whatever in exposing the murderer of Maximo Velasquez."

"Are you quite positive that neither Rocco or any of his gang killed the Spanish Consul's secretary?" asked the chief.

"Yes, I'd stake my life on it."

"And you imagine some woman stabbed him?"

"The footprints we found seemed to indicate that."

"Yet Harry said he distinctly saw that the fleeing murderer was a man."

"It might have been a woman in man's clothing, chief," the boy replied. "Yet I must say I never saw a woman on earth able to run as that fugitive criminal did."

"In that case it must have been a man with woman's shoes on."

"Yes," the boy replied, "I favor that theory."

"But why would a man wear woman's shoes?"

The detectives pondered.

Finally a theory flashed across Old King Brady's mind.

"By Jove, I have an idea!" he exclaimed.

"Let's hear it," laughed the chief, quietly.

"The Cuban men wear shoes with high, pointed heels, narrow soles, and pointed toes. They usually have very small feet. The imprints might have been made by a Cuban shoe."

"Then you think a Cuban may have been the criminal?"

"No, not exactly. It might have been an American," said Old King Brady, reflectively taking a chew of tobacco. "Those shoes would most likely be worn by some one who goes to Cuba. That some one might be a person connected with a steamer which runs to Havana. The big diamond came from there, you know. It might be one of the crew of the steamer Newport, in fact."

"Why such reasoning?"

"Well, a man aboard that steamer knew all about the diamond, and knew Velasquez had it in his possession——"

"You refer to the purser?" asked the chief.

"Exactly."

"And suspect him?"

"Yes."

"Why not sound him?"

"Is that steamer in port yet?"

"She is. In fact, she sails to-morrow afternoon."

"Before she departs we must interview the purser."

"Why not to-night?"

"I intend to."

"It's queer the purser would safely carry the stone here from the West Indies, turn it over to Velasquez, and afterward kill him to get it."

"Not at all," replied Old King Brady. "He was known to have had the stone by those who sent it, and by Velasquez, who received it. By delivering the diamond, he could show a clear record. With its delivery he cleared himself of all responsibility. When it left his hands and was given to Velasquez, his responsibility ended. But he may have planned to follow and rob the Spaniard in such a way that he would not be detected. As the Spaniard recognized him he very likely stabbed the man to avoid exposure. He then intended to sell the stone and keep the money."

"It's a theory worth proving, Old King Brady."

"We shall test it, sir."

"Do so, by all means, and let me know the result."

The Bradys departed.

They had the most excellent reason for suspecting the purser, for he was the only person who knew about the diamond being in the possession of Velasquez, beside themselves.

Making their way down Wall street, they boarded the steamer, and a sailor stopped them at the head of the gang-plank.

"No admittance, except on business, gents!" he exclaimed.

"We have business here," answered Old King Brady, showing his badge, and the sailor moved aside, and said in meek tones:

"Oh, officers, eh?"

"Is the purser aboard?"

"Mr. Schroeder? Yes."

"Where is he?"

"In his state-room, on the upper deck."

The detectives passed into the port gangway, went through a door into the cabin, and passed up the stairs into the social hall.

Here they went out a door to the deck.

Walking along, they scanned the name-plates over the doors, and up forward saw the room they were looking for. Just then the door opened, and a man in uniform emerged.

He was a small man with a brown mustache, and he glanced carelessly at the Bradys a moment, and then gave a violent start.

Recoiling a few paces, he glared at them intently, his face turning very pale, and a troubled expression crossing his countenance.

The next moment, by a violent effort of will, he recovered his composure.

None of these signs of a strong emotion escaped the keen glance of the watching detectives, but they said nothing.

For an instant the man looked as if he wanted to say something, but he suddenly checked the impulse, and tightening up, he passed them by without paying any heed to them.

"Harry, shadow him. He must be Schroeder."

"All right, Old King Brady."

"I think he's going to leave the steamer."

"He was exceedingly startled to see us."

"You are right, Harry. He must have met us before."

"No doubt, if he was the person who dogged us up to Central Park while we were shadowing Velasquez. He must know we are detectives, and for that reason showed so much agitation."

"While you are gone I'll make some inquiries here."

The boy nodded, and hurrying away, he darted down the companionway.

When Harry was gone, Old King Brady returned to the cabin, and meeting the steward, he asked him:

"Can you show me the waiter who attends to Mr. Schroeder's room?"

"Yes, sir. That boy over there with red hair."

"Thank you. I want to speak to him privately."

And Old King Brady approached the boy, and taking him aside, he asked:

"Did you ever see this dagger before?"

And he showed the waiter the knife that killed Velasquez.

The waiter cast one glance at it, and replied at once.

"Why, certainly I have. It belongs to Mr. Schroeder, our purser, and he keeps it on the desk in his state-room as a paper weight."

"Are you sure?"

"I could swear to it, sir. He bought it in Havana the last time we were down there. As I clean up his room every day, I ought to know, for I have often seen it before."

"Of course you ought to," replied Old King Brady. "Another question."

"Well, sir, what is it?"

"Did Mr. Schroeder leave this ship after five o'clock on the night after the day you arrived here in port?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

The waiter looked somewhat surprised at the odd questions the detective was asking him, but he replied readily:

"Well, yes, he did leave the steamer that night, right after a Spaniard with a Van Dyke beard called on him. What made me notice it most was that he shed his uniform, put on an old suit, and went sneaking away after the Spaniard as if he were watching the man, and wanted to keep him in sight."

"Did he follow the man?"

"Yes, straight up Wall street."

"You saw him, did you?"

"I did, until they disappeared around the corner."

"Good enough! Now, I'm going to arrest you."

"What!" gasped the startled waiter.

"Only to hold you as a witness, though," laughed Old King Brady, showing his shield. "You'll be well paid for it, and we will see that you don't lose your job."

"Why, what has happened, sir?"

"Schroeder murdered that Spaniard, and the evidence you have given me will conclusively prove it. If you sail away on this ship to-morrow, we can't get your evidence. For that reason, I am going to detain you as a witness, to convict the purser."

There was no use rebelling, so the waiter left the ship with him.

In the meantime, Harry followed Schroeder downstairs, and saw him ask the sailor at the gangplank who the Bradys were.

"Police officers, and they were asking for you, sir," replied the sailor.

The look of fear on the purser's features intensified, and he hurried down to the dock, and hastily went ashore.

Harry saw him hasten up Wall street and hire a cab.

The boy procured a similar vehicle and pursued him closely.

The man was driven up Park Row to Chatham Square.

The vehicle paused before Simpson's pawn shop, and the purser entered.

Harry saw where he had gone, and possessing a wig and false mustache, he put them on, and turned his jacket inside out.

Putting on a soft felt hat he had rolled up in his pocket, he left his derby in the cab, told the driver to wait for him, and followed the man in.

Once inside, he saw that Schroeder had entered a small booth.

Harry passed into the adjoining one and listened.

"You wish to pawn this?" he heard a clerk ask wonderingly.

"I do," replied Schroeder, "and I want five thousand dollars."

"That's a large sum, sir."

"Yes, but the diamond is worth \$60,000."

The clerk whistled with astonishment, and was just going to ask him where he got such an enormous stone, when Harry glided into the booth occupied by the purser.

Pointing his pistol at the man's head, he cried:

"Schroeder, I want you!"

The alarmed pawnbroker dodged down behind the counter, and with a cry of alarm the purser wheeled around and faced the pistol.

"Oh!" he groaned, sinking upon his knees. "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!"

"Out with your wrists for the bracelets."

The man complied, and Harry promptly handcuffed him, and picked up a big diamond in a velvet case lying on the counter.

It was the gem stolen from the unlucky Velasquez.

"What are you arresting me for?" groaned the frightened purser.

"The murder of Maximo Velasquez for this big diamond!" Harry replied. "And there's no use of your denying it, for we've got dead evidence against you."

The purser almost fainted from fear.

Harry did not waste any words on him, but dragged him out to the waiting cab, and they were driven to headquarters.

When they arrived there, they found Old King Brady and the waiter awaiting them, and Harry produced the diamond, and told his story.

When Schroeder heard the waiter give his evidence, he broke down, as he was thrown into a panic, and confessed his crime.

Cupidity was what prompted him.

When Old King Brady examined his shoes, he found that the man wore a pair of small, high-heeled Cuban gaiters, which just fit the copy he made of the imprints in the ground at the scene of the crime.

Schroeder admitted that he had pursued Velasquez from the steamer to the park, and having waylaid him, stabbed and robbed him.

He was locked up.

The Bradys had finished their task.

Not long after that the purser was put on trial, and having been convicted, he was sentenced for life, as the waiter's evidence helped to convict him.

The Government confiscated the big diamond he smuggled in.

Then the gypsies were brought up for trial, and Rocco and Posey were sent to Sing Sing for ten years apiece.

And the rest of the gypsies went with them for shorter terms.

Zmaranda and her tribe left for parts unknown, and the newspapers for some time after contained accounts of the Bradys' great work.

The detectives had won the big rewards offered by Mr. Fairfax and the chief of police for apprehending the child-stealers, and they deserved them.

Their work among the gypsies had been fraught with much excitement and many dangers, but the next case they handled was still more exciting. The next number of this weekly will give our readers an account of their latest work.

[THE END.]

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